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北京青年报

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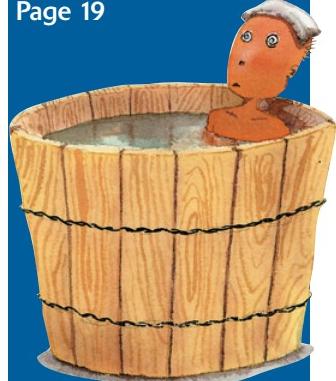
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北京青年报
BEIJING YOUTH DAILY



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their mark

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temple fairs

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Rice for Obama grandma's kids



Barak Obama's oath of office created a greater stir worldwide than any former president's. Celebrations extended around the world, especially into his grandmother's country Kenya. In Beijing, a rice donation program was held by the Embassy of Kenya and Chinese organizations. Collected rice will go to 80 orphans adopted by Sarah Hussein Obama. The above watercolor painting of Barak and Sarah Obama by Chinese painter Yu Chengsong was displayed at the event.

For Obama's inauguration and the event see Pages 5 and 9.



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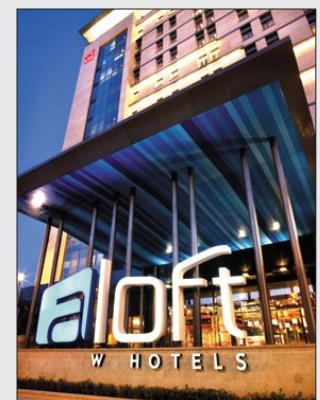
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brings loft living
to local hotels



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to teaching
the country's poor

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NGO puts local
migrant children
on stage

Web sites close dealing pages to scatter online scalpers

By Wang Yu

Passengers banking on the Internet to buy a train ticket home may be in for a tough time this year. Popular life information sharing Web sites such as ganji.com and huochebiao.com closed their ticket exchange pages on January 19 in an effort to squash scalpers.

The holiday ticket rush has been a problem for many years for those who come from remote parts of the country to work or study in the big city. The rise of the Internet gave passengers a new option for online ticket booking or buying from others who have redundant tickets.

2022 World Cup in China a dream?

By Zheng Lu

A news report filed by Reuters Monday has taken the country by storm in suggesting China may be on the list of countries bidding to host the FIFA 2022 World Cup.

In the release, Sepp Blatter, president of FIFA, named 10 countries that may be bidding to host the tournament. "I do hope Russia (will bid), Japan, Qatar, China and Australia," he told Reuters.

"As far as I know, this issue has not been formally raised yet," said Liu Dianqiu, an official in the administration department of the Chinese Football Association (CFA).

Fans took it as a signal that China has already prepared to bid on BBS, many guessed the reason for a bid would be to push the poor national team into becoming a real contender for the cup.

Officials at the State Physical Culture Administration were non-committal about the news. Xinhua News Agency reported that one official said he had not heard anything about a bid, adding that the CFA "has not done any research on the matter up to now."

"It is not easy to bid for the World Cup. There are so many procedures to go through." Another insider supported this by citing FIFA's new requirements for qualified bidders.

According to a circular sent to national associations last Thursday by FIFA, "infrastructure and facilities in the host county must be of the highest quality." The letter added that approximately 12 stadiums with minimum capacities of 40,000 would be required.

"To bid for the World Cup calls for 12 cities to join together, and that will definitely involve local governments," the insider said, pointing to the complexity of the process. "From the Sports Bureau to the CFA, both institutions have an interest in bidding for the World Cup, but no application has been submitted."

Having been asked about the status quo of Chinese football, Liu Dianqiu said it was "fair enough." But February 2 is the deadline to bid for the 2018 and 2022 World Cup tournaments. With the deadline below the 10-day countdown, the country will probably have to abandon this chance.

"Usually people can create a topic about tickets dealings on BBSs. You can just sit in front of the screen, refresh the page and wait for the ticket you want," said Yang Bo, a Web editor whose hometown is Chifeng, a city in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

"I don't have time to go to the train station to wait in the terrible lines, and even if I make it to the ticket window, there is never anything left. But on the Internet, I may be able to get a sleeper ticket," Yang added.

If the users enter the "train ticket" page on ganji.com, a notice has replaced the ticket informa-

tion. "As a responsible information sharing platform, we decided to close our ticket information page temporarily," the Web site said in the notice.

The site's service staff said on its hotline that they received orders from the government and do not know when the service can resume.

It is true that such Web sites provided an unintended free market for scalpers. According to the authorities, the police department began "Project Blue Shield" to stop scalpers last December. They have arrested 2,300 people and recovered 78,000 scalped

train tickets, including 60,000 fake tickets, with a total value of 2.46 million yuan.

"I know some of the online dealers are scalpers and usually they ask for an extra 100 yuan. So what? I have to get a ticket to go back home for the Spring Festival," said Sun Beibei who makes the trek back to Dalian of Liaoning Province.

On Kuxun.cn, users can still check ticket information using its search engine. Scalpers may ask for higher fees on small Web sites. "Illegal ticket dealing should be banned, but this kind of management just makes it more difficult for us to buy tickets," Sun said.

Gov says bird flu epidemic still unlikely

By Han Manman

There is no evidence of a coming bird flu epidemic, the National Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said Wednesday after three people died from the disease this month and a fourth person remains critically ill.

"The four cases came from different provinces, there is no epidemiological connection between them; they are sporadic cases," Shu Yuelong, a flu expert at the CDC, said.

"China is likely to see more individual human bird flu cases, but an outbreak of the disease is unlikely," Shu said.

"Statistics show that spring and winter are the peak seasons in which bird flu spreads," Shu said. "The situation urges us to further strengthen prevention and supervision of the epidemic, and ensure early detection and diagnosis when new cases are found," he said.

Shu suggested that the public should stay away from sick or dead poultry and reduce contact with live poultry, as poultry remains the main channel for the spread of the virus.

The government ordered an improvement in the monitoring and management of live poultry markets Wednesday.

In a joint circular, the ministries of health, agriculture and the State Administration of Industry and Commerce urged local bureaus to work closely in supervising and managing live poultry markets, which experts say are key to human bird flu prevention and control.

Local offices must maintain 24-hour supervision of the markets, and once bird flu or suspected cases are spotted, they must investigate as a matter of emergency epidemiological investigation, trace the source and isolate those having close contact with affected birds to curb the spread of the disease.

Localities were urged to close live poultry markets in urban areas, and disinfect markets daily if they cannot be closed. Local bureaus of the three agencies were also told to launch a daily surveillance and reporting system and to deal with the situation once the disease was found.

Three people have died of bird flu this year. The victims were a 19-year-old woman in Beijing on January 5, a 27-year-old woman in Shandong Province on January 17 and a 16-year-old male student in Hunan Province on Tuesday. A two-year-old is receiving treatment in Shanxi Province.

Airports packed with Spring Festival travelers



Capital International Airport is packed as of January 20. Official estimates predict 6,500,000 passengers will pass through its gates during the Spring Festival travel season. It will service an average 1,330 flights per day. The airport has prepared its security and services departments to handle the traffic.

CFP Photo (By Jin Zhu)

City to rebuild churches and mosques

By Han Manman

The government plans to rebuild or restore 12 churches, mosques and temples in the capital to offer religious people a better environment for worship.

Yang Xiaodong, an official with the Beijing Religion Bureau, said one of the projects is located in Changxindian in the southwest. The city government allocated 12 million yuan for its reconstruction.

"The church is in the heart of Changxindian township, home to about 200 Catholics. It will make life easier for believers because they

will no longer have to travel all the way to Xuanwumen Catholic Church to attend mass," Wang Lei, venue and real estate manager of Beijing Catholics Association, said.

Wang said once the church is rebuilt, it will also make mass attendance more convenient for Catholics in neighboring Fengtai, Fangshan and Shijingshan districts.

Built about a century ago, the Changxindian Church used to be the biggest in southwest Beijing. After the revolution it was turned into a warehouse used through the 1950s and 1960s.

Father Zhao Qinglong, a coordinator of Changxindian reconstruction project, said the central government has adopted a policy to gradually restore places of worship. The Changxindian Church reconstruction project is the first step in that direction.

In 2005, the Beijing municipal government listed the Changxindian Rebuilding Project as one of 55 government "must-dos" to implement the central government policy.

Zhao said, more churches are on the restoration and rebuilding agenda including the Zhengfu Church and the Pingfang Church

in Haidian and Chaoyang districts.

"Beijing is in need of more places of worship. The number of Catholics in Beijing is 50,000-60,000, but we have only 20 Catholic churches with eight in the downtown," said Father Zhen Xuebin, secretary-general of the Beijing Diocese.

Zhen said the number of Catholics is growing as people enjoy more freedom to convert and more foreigners come to Beijing.

Two mosques are also on the list: one on Jianfang Street in Xicheng district and the other by Qianmen in Xuanwu district, the bureau said.

Netizen makes plaster car to protest unreasonable fees

By Wang Yu

Netizens at the XCar Tianjin community are distributing plaster casts of cars branded with the number "55" and the text, "I can't say too much about it." The cars are a protest against the controversial monthly "passing fee" initiated by the Tianjin local government.

Liu Bo, chief officer of the Tianjin Municipal Traffic Management Bureau, uttered the phrase now made famous on the plaster cars during his interview with CCTV's Focus. The program focuses on controversial social phenomena and has a lot of influence in the country.

Tianjin took out loans in 1990 to begin constructing its high-quality roads. To pay back the debt, local authorities installed 42 toll gates and caused major traffic jams. On June 1, 2003, the bureau began charging all drivers a monthly 55-yuan 'passing fee.'

"It's unfair, I don't even drive on such roads, why should I pay the debt?" Jinshu Luzhang, a netizen on Xcar.com.cn, said.

Baobao, designer of the plaster car, has been a driver for four years. She made her mark on the topic after proposing her plan on Xcar's BBS after the CCTV Focus program aired.

"I spent my own money and made three plaster casts the noon after the broadcast. All we drivers hope to do is just make our voices heard by the government. The attitude of the officer (Liu Bo) on that TV program was unacceptable. It's our obligation to pay for the road construction, but we also have the right to know how much money they have collected during the past few years and where it went," Baobao said.

According to Tianjin's policy, drivers must pay a passing fee every

year for 25 years starting from 2003. No one knows how the government calculated this figure or how accurate it is, especially with the number of cars on the road increasing yearly.

"Roads are business products since they were built using commercial loans. The users are left to pay the debt and they deserve to know the locations of these roads to choose their paths," said Bai Xuejie, a professor at the Institute of Transportation Economics of Nankai University.

Tianjin's problem was exposed after the government stopped collecting tolls on January 1. Similar "passing fees" are charged in major cities like Shanghai and Chongqing. Reforms to the fuel tax mandated a gradual elimination of these fees, but the policy never fixed any plans for the transition period.

On January 14, Wang Shux-



The "55" plaster

Photo provided by Xcar

ing, vice director of the Tianjin Municipal Traffic Management Bureau said at a press conference that the collection of a passing fee is legal and will continue. The total income from passing fees collected in 2003 was 7.2 billion yuan.

"I have friends in other districts who will help me distribute the plasters. They are free for all drivers. I won't stop doing this until we get a clear explanation," Baobao said.

Kobe Bryant joins list of Sina's celebrity bloggers

By Zhang Dongya

NBA superstar and Los Angeles Lakers basketball player Kobe Bryant said he would start an official blog on Sina.com, a popular Internet portal, at a news conference in Los Angeles last Thursday.

The 30-year-old Bryant attended the conference in a traditional Chinese shirt and blue jeans. He was sporting a bandage over his right eye after being injured in a recent game against the Miami Heat.

Bryant said it would be his first blog, and one of his main goals was staying connected to Chinese fans. "Through my blog, I look forward to getting to know all of you better, and for you to learn more about me," he said.

To date, the star's blog has two posts in both Chinese and English. "I feel this blog really gives me the chance to connect directly with all of you — my Chinese fans," Bryant said on his blog.

Sina.com is well-known for gathering celebrities to write blogs on its site, though it has also been criticized since most of these blogs are actually written by Sina's staff.

Bryant said in his second post that the English version was written by himself, "from my BlackBerry to my SINA website." The Sina team translates them from English into Chinese and posts them on the Web with headlines.

The official Web site includes news, interviews, pictures and videos of Bryant. Sina also produced an exclusive logo as part of the agreement, but it refused to discuss the financial details of the agreement.

Bryant is the second NBA star to launch a Web site on Sina.com following Chinese player Yi Jianlian.

The chief executive of Sina Cao Guowei estimated there were 300 million NBA fans in China, which was nearly as many as the entire US population. Kobe Bryant is considered the most important basketball player in China next to Yao Ming.

At the time of writing, Bryant's blog has received 1 million hits in the past week, and the posts generated 20,000 comments.



Kobe Bryant's Sina blog
Photo provided by Sina.com.cn

Kung fu fans perform at Bird's Nest



Seven kung fu fans from overseas visited the National Stadium. They set up a video-camera to record their performances of patterns with various weapons. Their performance stunned other visitors to the Bird's Nest.

CFP Photo

50 Shanxi teens kidnapped, beaten in Myanmar

By Annie Wei

Fifty teens in Shanxi Province have been kidnapped, and the kidnappings are continuing according to the province's police. *The Beijing News* ran a story earlier this week about the teens who were lured to Myanmar with promises of good jobs, and there were tortured until their families paid a ransom.

The disappearances began in Yuncheng, Shanxi Province, last October. According to local police records, the children went missing after they told their parents they were leaving home to find work in the south. Some said they were going to a friend's birthday party.

The parents began to receive phone calls from Myanmar. A

father Zhou Runsheng said he got a call from his son last October 1. During the call, his son Zhou Dawei asked his father to pay 80,000 yuan to rescue him from execution after being arrested for dealing drugs.

Zhou told his neighbors and relatives who doubted a repeat of his bad luck.

Then they heard from their other neighbors.

Zhang Yunbao, police captain in the city's Yanhu District, said he had received 10 similar reports.

Last month, two kidnapped teenagers including Zhou Dawei were released after their fathers each wired 80,000 yuan to the appointed bank accounts.

Both boys said they were con-

tacted by another boy, Du Feng, a classmate from elementary school. Du invited them to his hotel to show off his wealth, claiming that he was doing business in Myanmar. He said he wanted to help them make a fortune and talked the boys into the trip. They were beaten and tortured till their fathers paid.

According to *The Beijing News'* report, families whose children are missing rarely earn 800 yuan per person per month, but they were asked to pay a 40,000-80,000 yuan ransom.

Yao, a police officer from the district, said the list of 50 victims did not include families who refused to file a report after they heard there was nothing the local police could do.

Yao said although police have tightened the borders to prevent kidnapping, there has been no visible impact.

Zhao, a consul at the Chinese embassy in Myanmar, said it is almost impossible to attack cross-border criminals because China cannot send special agents to Myitkyina. He said it was different from sending the military to Somalia, because in that case it was formally invited to attack the pirates.

Zhao said cross-border kidnappings dated back as far as 2007, and the number of cases has grown rapidly. Zhao also said they were coordinating with the Burmese government to close down gambling sites along the border, which may attract many Chinese gamblers.

Boutique hotels come to Beijing

Looking for Chinese partners

Claus Sendlinger, CEO and president of Design Hotels, visited Beijing to hold an exhibition in 798 Art District Monday.

The exhibition had a few tables with Apple iTouch sets showing videos of boutique hotels around the world, and gave viewers a hint about how hotels could be redesigned.

Sendlinger introduced several fields where design is having an influence, including publication, fashion and IT, and then said hotels also need designers.

His background is in public relations, and when he worked with friends in the music industry, he always booked the hotels. "They always ask me where we should stay. There were cool bars, cool restaurants and cool pools, but there were no cool hotels," Sendlinger said. "This is how we started, because we saw the need, and there is a new generation looking for this kind of product, so we started Design Hotels."

Design Hotels is more a worldwide club for cool hotels. Last year, it received 450 applications from around the world. Now it has come to China for more partners, as it sees a big market here.

The club has only one Chinese member, The Emperor, designed by Berlin-based Graft Labs. "The Emperor is a blend of ancient tradition and progressive modernity, just like 21st-century China," the Design Hotel Book says.

Sendlinger expects to add another 10 boutique hotels in Beijing to the list this year.

A new way of traveling

The Opposite House, located in the Village at Sanlitun, takes its name from the guesthouse which sits opposite a traditional courtyard style home. Anthony Ross, the general manager of the hotel, saw a lot of confidence in this newly opened boutique hotel. The famous Japanese architect Kengo Kuma contributed his talent to the hotel. "This is Kuma's first interior design, and it is very original. That is why we chose him," Ross said.

The Opposite House greets customers with its special emerald glass exterior. Inside, there is a large central atrium where the conventional boundaries of hotel activities are subtly blurred. Having 98 contemporary studios and a stunning Penthouse on two floors, the hotel provides loft-living for its patrons.

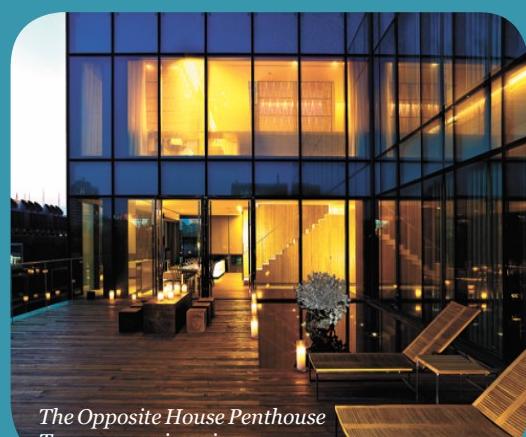
Opposite House opened just before the Beijing Olympics and was lauded for its contemporary design inspired by traditional Chinese wood lattice.

When asked about the hotel, Ross said it was artistic, personal, fun, and a different lifestyle. Most of its visitors are



Remix lobby area of aloft

Photo provided by aloft



The Opposite House Penthouse Terrace evening view

Photo provided by The Opposite House



The outside of aloft

Photo provided by aloft

By Gan Tian

Travelers are demanding more when they check in at hotels. They do not care about the services so much as its atmosphere. The response has been a rise in boutique and design hotels.

Time to work, President Obama

Barack Hussein Obama became the 44th president of the US on Tuesday before a massive crowd reveling in a moment of historical significance, and called on Americans to confront together an economic crisis that he said was caused by "our collective failure to make hard choices."

In his inaugural address, Obama acknowledged the change his presidency represented and described himself as a "man whose father less than 60 years ago might not have been served at a local restaurant." Although the crowd and the podium around him were full of elated African Americans, Obama, the country's first black president, did not dwell on that in his speech.

On Wednesday, his first full day in office, Obama turned his attention towards his goals of rescuing the economy, charting a new course for the US war in Iraq and Afghanistan and shaping his approach to the Middle East conflict.

Obama has pledged bold and swift action in dealing with the US's worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. With financial markets reeling and job losses mounting, Obama will meet with his economic advisers, who are working with the Democratic-led Congress on a US \$825 billion (5.64 trillion yuan) fiscal stimulus package.

He also is seeking fresh approaches to repair the country's battered financial system and is mulling a host of ideas, including the creation of a government-run bank that would buy up toxic assets from ailing US banks.

Iraq and Afghanistan will dominate Obama's foreign policy agenda, but he has also said he will take an active role to try to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

He may move quickly to name a Middle East envoy and is strongly considering George Mitchell, a former US senator and veteran international troubleshooter, for the job.

Obama also will discuss plans to bolster troops in Afghanistan when he meets with a Pentagon delegation led by Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Navy Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

(New York Times/Reuters)

"On this day, we come to proclaim an end to the petty grievances and false promises, the recriminations and worn-out dogmas, that for far too long have strangled our politics," Barack Obama said at his inaugural address after being sworn in as the US's 44th president and its first black leader in an atmosphere filled with hope as well as challenges.



Obama is sworn in as the US's 44th president and started work Wednesday.

Xinhua Photo

News analyst: Hope on economy, but challenges ahead

Hope is one thing, reality is another. On Tuesday, about 2 million people gathered in Washington DC to celebrate the inauguration of Barack Obama as US President, hoping he will save the economy, but Wall Street stocks plunged more than 4 percent that day.

In his address just after taking the oath of office, Obama said that the US was "in the midst of crisis is now well understood," listing war, economy, healthcare, jobs and other challenges.

"Our economy is badly weak-

ened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age," the new president said.

But Obama assured Americans that although "the challenges we face are real, serious and many," and "will not be met easily or in a short span of time," the goals "will be met."

A recent national poll showed that Obama's approval rating had risen to nearly 80 percent, reflecting people's satisfaction with his

work during the transition period, his choice of cabinet members, as well as high expectations of his administration.

"I think he is going to do a magnificent job. He has several teams that would change the nation," said David Torain II, head of the mathematics department at Hampton University, who joined the crowds that came for the inauguration at the national capital.

Torain, however, is not optimistic on the economy. "It might take a long time to get out of the meltdown. I don't think any-

body can turn it around in six months," he said.

But Wall Street is not waiting. The US stock market plunged more than 4 percent on Inauguration Day as bank woes spread, and investors failed to find comfort from Obama's speech.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average was down more than 330 points, or 4 percent, falling below 8,000 for the first time in 2009, while the Standard & Poor's 500 and the Nasdaq indexes dropped more than 5 percent

(By Liu Hong/Xinhua)

China's reaction: Obama represents spirit of US

In the US, expectations are high that change will come once Barack Obama becomes president. China, however, hopes for a status quo.

This month, the country celebrates the 30th anniversary of restored diplomatic relations with the US. Officials expressed confidence that Sino-US relations will carry on as before. "China expects the new US administration to show strategic vision and political

wisdom, and work from the good legacies left by earlier administrations," Vice Foreign Minister He Yafei said.

But questions remain about whether Obama and his administration will be able to maintain goodwill in the face of a massive trade imbalance in these challenging economic times.

A word that has resurfaced in public discussions about the global

economic crisis is protectionism. In 2007, Obama proposed banning all toys made in China after a series of consumer safety scares.

Away from the realm of economics, there seems to be less interest in how Obama will fare. In downtown Wangfujing shopping district, most people were more interested in last-minute shopping for gifts to bring back home for the Spring Festival than in talking

about the inauguration.

Many said it was a historic event for the US. "[Obama] represents the American spirit, because he is a black man and America is a place that represents equal opportunity," said one shopper. "He gives everyone a new sense of hope."

Young Chinese people seem optimistic about Obama. "He seems much more open-minded," said Vicky, a teacher in Beijing.

"Bush seemed aggressive, ready to take action instead of talking through problems first."

"I think the Chinese still want to see America as a leader, but as a leader who wants to listen, who wants to talk, and who doesn't just impose her will and who wants to be responsible," Li Xin, a local editor, said. "And Obama seems capable of doing that," he said.

(Agencies)

Economy grows 6.8%, slowest pace in 7 years

The country's economy expanded at its slowest pace in seven years as the global recession dragged down exports, increasing pressure for more government spending and lower interest rates to buoy growth.

Gross domestic product grew 6.8 percent in the fourth quarter from a year earlier, after a 9 percent gain in the previous three months, the statistics bureau said yesterday.

Plummeting Chinese demand for parts and materials for exports is reverberating across Asia and the Pacific, driving

Taiwan, South Korea and Australia closer to recessions and worsening Japan's slump. Premier Wen Jiabao said this week that the government must work urgently this quarter to reverse the slowdown and maintain social stability amid a very grim outlook for jobs.

"It's an astonishingly steep slowdown," said Paul Cavey, an economist with Macquarie Securities in Hong Kong. "We haven't yet seen all of the pain."

The central bank may cut the key one-year lending rate by as much as 81 basis points

to 4.5 percent by the middle of the year, after 2.16 percentage points of reductions since September, Cavey said. Bank reserve requirements will also decline, he said.

The 9 percent pace of growth for 2008 compares with the 13 percent expansion that pushed China past Germany in 2007 to become the world's third-biggest economy.

"The international financial crisis is deepening and spreading with a continuing negative impact on the domestic economy," Ma Jiantang, head of the

statistics bureau, said.

China's growth will weaken by 3 percent to 4 percent this quarter, the slowest since quarterly figures began in 1994, before stimulus measures kick in and export demand starts to revive, said Wang Qing, Hong Kong-based chief China economist at Morgan Stanley.

Exports will decline 6 percent this year, down from a 17.2 percent gain in 2008, according to Fitch Ratings. China has already stalled gains by the yuan against the dollar to aid exporters. **(Agencies)**

Millionaires get thriftier and reasonable on consumptions

By Jin Zhu

Millionaires are shifting their investment priorities from the stock market to the property sector and are tightening their belts on consumption of luxury goods, according to the latest survey of elite consumer preferences in the Hurun Report released January 15.

The survey polled 345 respondents with assets of at least 10 million yuan. According to the report, their proportion of real estate investment has increased from 26 percent to 34 percent, while their proportion of investment in the stock market fell from 33 percent to 18 percent compared with statistics from 2007.

The millionaires are also spending less on consumption.

"The rich we surveyed said that their average expenditures for the whole year were 2 million yuan. Since international media usually reports that the rich in China spend 4 to 5 million yuan per year, I felt great surprise when the survey results were significantly less than I expected," said Rupert Hoogewerf, chairman of luxury publishing group Hurun Report.

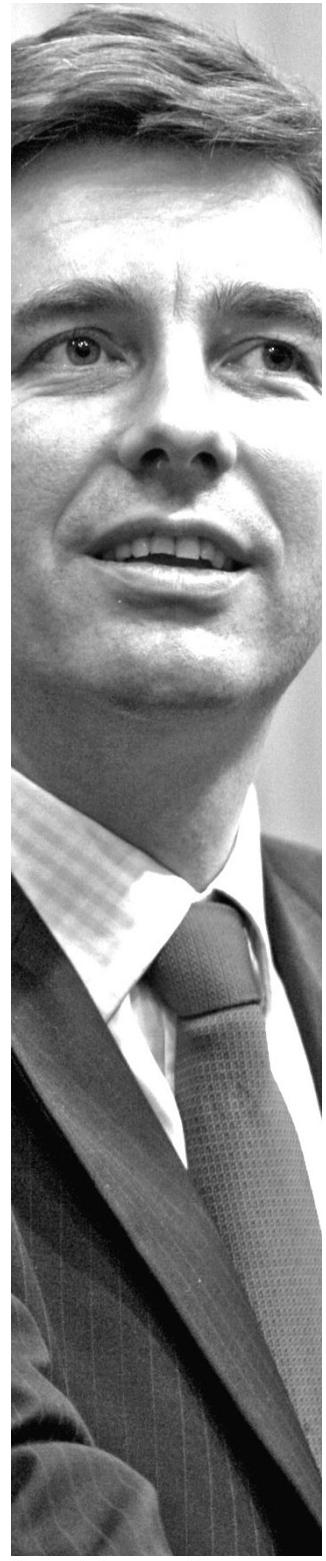
Rupert said the current financial crisis has had a sharp impact on the net worth of the rich.

"In the two months from early September to early November, the average wealth of the richest who own listed companies shrank by 45 percent, after an over 20 percent fall earlier in 2008," Rupert said.

"Although the sales of luxury goods in China are expected to see a slow down in 2009, China remains the most important market for luxury brands," he said.

"Famous brand watches and jewellery are the most popular items to collect because they keep their value. Ancient calligraphy and paintings have also attracted 25 percent of the surveyed millionaires for their scarcity," he added.

According to the lastest survey, the rich spend the most on daily luxury goods, followed by gifts and their children's education. The rich from the manufacturing powerhouse Zhejiang Province had the most buying power in luxury items.



Rupert Hoogewerf CFP Photo

Market watch

Starbucks brews first China blend to perk up business

US coffee chain Starbucks, keen to boost business in China, is brewing for Lunar New Year a limited-edition blend that includes, for the first time, Chinese beans.

The "South of the Clouds" blend, named for the meaning of semi-tropical Yunnan Province, was unveiled in Singapore Monday, a week after its Greater China debut, Starbucks' Beijing spokeswoman Caren Li said.

The coffee blends arabica beans from Latin America, Asia Pacific and the western Baoshan regions of Yunnan, the main coffee-growing province in the homeland of tea.

"Our priority is local relevance," Li said. "We are very proud of this coffee and are confident it will be popular with our customers."

Coffee grown in Yunnan, which borders Asia's top coffee producer Vietnam, has been available for over a decade. It is often sold as a cheap alternative to imported beans.

Li said the blend offers an opportunity for Starbucks to expand further.



Starbucks has high hopes for China's market.

IC Photo

"We spent more than three years working in Yunnan with local farmers and local coffee suppliers. The coffee has gentle acidity, medium round body and a soft herbal flavor in the finish with a cocoa aftertaste," she said.

Li declined to give any figures on production or details about the blend, which she said is being sold in a "preview launch" before Yunnan-sourced lines roll out.

The blend is on sale as a "coffee of the week" in Star-

bucks' 700 outlets in Greater China, as well as stores in Singapore and in Malaysia ahead of the Lunar New Year, which starts next week. It will be on sale in China until February 19.

Starbucks opened its first outlet on the mainland in 1999 and its president, Martin Coles, said last week the company sees the country as one of its fastest growing markets, even as it closes down stores in other markets. **(Agencies)**

WTO to rule in China trade dispute with US

The World Trade Organization (WTO) agreed Tuesday to rule on a dispute initiated by China over US measures against imports of certain steel pipes, tires and woven sacks.

The WTO's dispute settlement body decided to set up a panel to judge the complaint, highlighting trade tension between Washington and Beijing on the day the new US administration of Barack Obama took office.

The US used its one-time right to block the formation of a panel last month, but under global trade rules it was not able to do so twice.

"China is greatly concerned by the various substantive and procedural problems found in the US anti-dumping and countervailing duty investigations and measures against Chinese products at issue," the government said in a statement to the WTO where it formally requested a panel for a second time.

Refurbished iPods cheaper in China

Apple said on Tuesday it had launched an online shop selling second-hand Apple products in China, offering discounts of up to 22 percent, as it looks to beef up its business in the country.

These are products that were previously sold and returned to Apple and have undergone quality tests, the company's website said.

The refurbished products available on Apple's Chinese website ranged from a 308-yuan iPod shuffle to an iMac computer costing more than 14,000 yuan.

"We kicked off the campaign at the end of last year," said Huang Yuna, Apple's spokeswoman in China. She declined to give a figure of total used products available.

Apple has introduced similar deals in other countries, including the US, the United Kingdom and Japan, for years, but second-hand purchase only makes up a small portion of its total sales.

Komatsu to expand in China, bucking industry slump

Japanese construction equipment maker Komatsu will boost production capacity by relocating one of its major plants, a rare sign of expansion in an industry hit by slowing demand.

Komatsu, the world's No. 2 maker of earth-moving equipment after US-based Caterpillar, said it would move a factory making wheel loaders, hydraulic excavators and dump trucks to a new and larger site in Jiangsu Province.

The new factory will start operations in 2010 with a 15 percent higher production capacity than the old site, the company said in a release. It did not disclose how much this would increase the company's overall output.

Komatsu's announcement comes as a slowing global economy dampens sales in all major markets including China, which until recently seemed to have an insatiable demand for equipment to support a construction boom. **(Agencies)**

Artist painted daughter naked



Li Qin's naked paintings sparked a heated debate.

By Huang Daohen

A leading artist from earthquake-struck Deyang City in Sichuan Province stunned both the arts community and the public with his realistic oil paintings exhibited at the first arts festival held in Huangjueping, Chongqing over the weekend, the *Chongqing Morning Post* reported.

The artist's album of paintings, titled "Oriental Goddess and Mountain Ghost Series," features a naked woman in fairytale-like scenes that include savage beasts. The naked woman is 23-year-old Li Qin, a college student majoring in oil painting and the daughter of the painter, Li Zhuangping.

Li Zhuangping, 61, said his work was inspired by the image of Yao Ji, the Wushan Mountain Goddess in ancient mythology.

Yao Ji is said to have seduced several emperors in their dreams, and this led to the term "Wushan Goddess" being used to describe a pretty lady.

The painter said his daughter's features matched those of Yao Ji's, so he asked her whether she would agree to pose nude for him. She agreed and work on the paintings took years.

Li said he wished to depict the harmony not only between human beings, but also between humans and nature and humans and animals.

But his paintings of his naked daughter sparked a heated debate over whether what he did was tantamount to incest. Most netizens say Li can be excused because the paintings were done for art's sake and that they are beautiful. How-

ever, the thought of a daughter being naked in front of her father makes one feel strange and uncomfortable, Li Xinrui, a Beijing resident, said.

Li Zhuangping said his family does not care what other people think. "No matter what people think or how they regard us, we take it as normal," he said.

He said that as a father, wicked thoughts did not enter his mind and his main concern was Li Qin's portrayal. "When my daughter agreed to be my nude model, it was a matter concerning art. We never saw it as an ethical issue," he said.

Li Qin, who has also done oil paintings, said she was glad to have been an instrument in creating art, especially those of her father's. "It was a pure thing," she said.

with customers' relevant personal information.

Feng Tao, director of the Law Working Committee of the Xuzhou Municipal People's Congress, said the ordinance actually does not mention online manhunts, which is an issue that has fallen under authorities' supervision.

Most Internet users disagree that the law should regulate which personal information should be publicized. According to a survey by people.com.cn, more than 90

Comment

Traditional concept matters

It is nothing. Why should some people feel uncomfortable? I think it's because of traditional social ethics. Many people may think of "incest" once they see the words "father," "daughter" and "naked" together. But they are merely a group of beautiful paintings and nothing untoward happened. The daughter was willing to model nude for her father, so why should we outsiders think much about it?

— Li Yinhe, sociologist

Negative impact

The act was improper. From an ethical viewpoint, the event will have a negative impact on social morals. If the paintings were kept at home, the act would have been personal. But when they went on exhibit, they then made a social impact. An adult daughter naked in front of her father is beyond what regular Chinese people find acceptable, and it will have a negative impact.

— Yuan Zushe, ethics expert

First daughter model

In our art circle, there are cases of a wife becoming a model. But it is our first time to see a "daughter model." Their experiment was no doubt a success and the beautiful paintings are really moving.

— Wang Xiaoqian, art critic

Brave and respectable

I commend their courage. I respect Li and his daughter for making a sacrifice in the name of art. Bravery is needed to break traditional ideas. The paintings were good.

— Hjalmar Winbladh, entrepreneur

Thirty pickpockets paraded

By Zhang Dongya

As many as 30 suspected pickpocket were paraded last Friday in densely-populated downtown Chongqing by local police, the *Chongqing Economic Times* reported.

Citizens lauded the public security bureau's move, but there were others who said pickpockets are human beings vested with dignity and should not be treated in such a manner.

Last Friday morning, fully-armed police officers took 30 pickpocket suspects to four city areas including the Caiyuanba long-distance bus station and the Longtousi inter-city bus station. They were arranged in two lines, with heads bowed.

The police did not make the suspects' names public, but assigned numbers to each person. "No.1, who was captured on January 11, mainly committed crimes in markets, commercial streets and bus stations in Dadukou District," an officer said on a loudspeaker.

Some pickpocket victims who were present flew into a rage. "I will kick him if I see him at the square!" said a woman who lost 5,000 yuan worth of cash and goods in a wholesale market.

The deputy director of the Public Security Bureau in Chongqing, Gao Xiaodong, told the *Chongqing Economic Times* they paraded the suspects in public to seek leads that would break a case. This was also done to make the public wary of the suspects and report any repeat offenders.

Gao said most of the suspects were habitual offenders. Those who failed to steal anything held up people with knives, he said.

With Spring Festival drawing near, pickpockets are running rampant in the streets. A netizen named csoo7 said on bbs.tiexue.net, "I recently got pickpocketed in Chongqing. It was so bad and I hate them! It should be dealt with like this so we will remember their faces!"

Some citizens criticized the move, saying it infringed on the suspects' human dignity.

A number of scholars suggested creating an information database for pickpockets. The Chongqing police responded by saying it has already set up such a database, and is preparing to share information with counterparts in cities like Beijing and Shanghai.

Xuzhou legislature bans online manhunts

By Wang Yu

Netizens of Xuzhou City who want to participate in "human flesh search engine" are up against a wall. On January 18, the Jiangsu Provincial People's Congress Standing Committee adopted the Xuzhou Computer Information System Security Protection Ordinance that prohibits its citizens from participating in online manhunts. The new law takes effect June 1.

According to the ordinance, people who release or spread

others' private information without authorization face a fine of up to 5,000 yuan or a six-month ban from using the Internet. Companies that violate the law will have their business licenses revoked as an additional punishment.

Moreover, the ordinance says that Internet cafes and hotels that offer Internet services should build a security system in line with state guidelines. Real-name registration of Internet users will be required, along

percent of netizens oppose Xuzhou's new ordinance. Most of them think it will take public accountability a step back.

Another difficulty mentioned is how the ordinance will be implemented. Real-name registration is essential to implementing the law, but the database cannot be created quickly. So it will be hard to track down whoever violates Xuzhou's new ordinance, let alone implementing the six-month ban on Internet use.

Comment

Battle between the law and the legal system

Online manhunt is a double-edged sword. From the day it started in China, it has revealed the veil that covers the ugly faces of some officials, but it also violates regular citizens' right to privacy. People cannot practice their right to surveil-

lance via the Internet. This is why most netizens do not agree with the local government ordinance.

Through the Online Manhunt Pact established by some Internet users, we can see that our legal system is still imperfect.

— Zhang Jingji, news observer

Masses are not mature

Gustave Le Bon, a French social psychologist, said in his book *The Crowd: A Study of Popular Mind* that crowds are not good at reasoning but are anxious to act. Things are similar here: if online manhunt is used by netizens without proper judgment, it will become a dangerous weapon

that can be fired at anybody.

— Howard Wong, journalist

Define privacy

The ordinance is said to be designed to protect individual privacy. But what if the law is used by people who try to conceal illegal acts? "Privacy" should be clearly defined.

— Keso, blogger

British man lives to serve and teach the poor

By Venus Lee

A British man touched the hearts of people lining up for tickets at the Hangzhou Railway Station last Friday when he began passing around cups of ginger tea. "Drink a cup of ginger tea to warm up," Adolfo Bosco Jones, 61, said in halting Chinese. Jones, an Italian-born British, has been doing volunteer work in China for the past eight years.

Going after teaching

Jones teaches a master's program in business administration at Tsinghua University. But each time he visits a new city, the first thing he does is to seek out a local volunteer organization and take part in its activities.

His volunteer work in the country began in 2001 when he was invited to present a lecture at Harbin University, in Heilongjiang Province. He fell in love with China and felt for poor children who could not afford to study English. He gave up his original plan of teaching opera and instead volunteered as an English teacher.

His charitable work has taken him to over 30 Chinese cities, but he is now based in Hangzhou Province. "Many Chinese students do not have a chance to interact with native English speakers due to poverty, which seriously affects their ability to communicate in English," Jones said.

He said many Chinese students waste time on ineffective methods of learning English; he teaches his students how to improve their confidence in speaking. "They are not stupid, but are rather too shy to open their mouths," he said. "I always encourage them to believe in themselves. 'Don't be afraid of



Jones distributes ginger tea to people lining up for tickets in a railway station.

Photo by Li Zhong

making mistakes.'"

Jones has a flair for language. He speaks seven languages and earned a PhD in linguistics from the University of London. He has led a colorful life, but has a special love for teaching. "I was a football player at AC Milan Youth Side, an actor, a producer and an opera singer when I was young. But I love teaching the most. I feel very excited when I'm with students. I consider teaching my life's mission," he said.

Born into a family of volunteers

Jones was born in a family with a rich tradition of volunteer work. His father, who was very friendly to others, did a lot of charitable work when he was alive, which deeply influenced Jones. His decision to devote his life to volunteering was made when he was 7 years old.

He has assisted some 300 people in Italy recover from drug addiction, and has given free lectures in Japan, South Korea and France. Since moving to China, he has spent most of his income to support his volunteer work. "I use the money I earn to help Chinese people who are in need," he said.

Despite his accomplishments, Jones describes himself as an ordinary man. "I am not rich, sometimes I even ask my son for help. However, I have money to spare any time there are poor children who need care," he said.

Although he has been away from his family for many years, he is not lonely. "All the volunteer associations are my home. Wherever I go, I am sure I will find them. And I have gotten much help from kind friends; I receive help just as I offer help to others," he said.

The dreams he cherishes

Jones has always dreamt of building a school for poor students. He also hopes to speak in many schools to share his knowledge and experience. "To teach someone to fish is better than to give that person fish. I can teach them English, marketing, acting and singing," he said.

He faces life each day with enthusiasm and optimism—even after he was diagnosed with gastric cancer. He said he has to make more effort to earn money to treat his disease, along with continuing to support poor students.

"Adolfo takes every chance he has to help others," Wang Wei, one of his friends, said. "Many people are touched by his friendliness and sincerity. Many company owners in his MBA class have begun to donate money towards his charity work."

Female drummer rocks Beijing

By Wang Yu

As the country's cultural center, Beijing is also referred to as the capital of China's rock and roll scene. There are over 2,000 bands in the city, but Ourself Beside Me is one of the few whose members are all women.

On January 10, the band performed at MAO Club to celebrate the release of their first album. Emi Namihira, the Japanese drummer of Ourself Beside Me, looked like just one of the crowd until she took the stage and shook the audience with her deep drum loops.

"I've liked singing since I was a child. My dad and my sister had a variety of records, which became my joy. But I didn't get into rock and roll until I listened to The Beatles' 'Let it Be' and got lost in their music," the 26-year-old said.

A band's drummer is usually the most athletic-looking person in the group, so it is hard to guess Namihira's choice of instrument because of her petite body. "I joined my first band in my first year of college. We were all beginners at playing music, so each of us tried every musical instrument that was essential to a band. I had a good feel for

rhythm, and that's how I became a drummer," she said.

Like most young rockers, Namihira has gotten into arguments with her parents about playing in a band. They worried about her future, especially since her studies took a backseat to music. "But they eventually came to see my shows with my relatives," she said. "Now I have my own life and a regular job. At last you will discover that your parents have always been there supporting you."

Namihira came to Beijing in 2002 to study Chinese at Minzu University. She went back to Japan the following year, but a part of her remained in China. "I couldn't help thinking about what would have happened if I stayed in Beijing. My will to learn Chinese and the energy of the city convinced me to come back in 2006," she said.

It was not easy at the beginning. She searched for jobs for two months before landing one at a Japanese IT company. "I couldn't afford a return ticket before I got that job," she said. Now she works in a US company and has arranged her schedule to accommodate her music. "Work in the daytime, prac-

tice with the band at night, perform in clubs on weekends. If we need to perform in other cities, I'll take my annual leave," she said.

Namihira met her bandmates Yang Fan and Xie Han in 2006, then she joined the duo. The band does not pay a salary: what the members earn is used to pay musical instruments and the rental of rehearsal venues.

Ourself Beside Me began recording their debut album in March 2007 under the label Maybe Mars Records. "We stopped for a couple of months during the process. The way we made this album was simultaneous recording, which allowed us to play improvisations and capture the feeling of performing live. It's a free, natural, enjoyable and comfortable album for me," Namihira said.

The band has built its reputation in the city's indie music circle. Namihira meanwhile lives like a Beijinger, with many local friends, especially musicians. "My only future plan is to enjoy my band and perform more in other cities," she said. "The most important thing in making music is to go after happiness and keep it with me to the end."



Emi Namihira Photo by Jin Yuxin

SMS scam victimizes foreign students

By Zheng Lu

Although Chinese residents have already been wiser up to mobile text message scams, foreign students are still susceptible because of their lack of awareness, according to an urgent notice issued yesterday by the Beijing Public Security Bureau's (PSB) Exit-Entry Administration.

From December to the present, three cases of short messaging system (SMS) fraud that involved foreigners were reported to the bureau. It is the first time the PSB has received such a report concerning foreigners.

The first case occurred in December and victimized a foreign student surnamed Mohammed, who is studying Chinese at the University of International Business and Economics. He said he received an SMS from an unidentified phone number soon after he received a message from his landlord reminding him to pay the rent. The second SMS told him to deposit money into a new account because the previously given bank account number was invalid.

Mohammed then deposited 10,000 yuan to the new account. He only realized he had been swindled when his landlord contacted him again about the rent payment.

Several days later, another foreign student named Milton who is also enrolled at the University of International Business and Economics received an SMS saying he had won 300,000 yuan in a raffle. He was asked to deposit into a bank account "commission charges" that added up to more than 7,000 yuan.

The third reported case was similar to the first. Altogether, the three cases involved more than 30,000 yuan.

Song Jiandong, vice director of the PSB's Division of Exit and Entry, said the three victims are foreign student who are here for short-term language studies. "They probably do not know the situation here," he said.

"Criminals often send messages in a way that an acquaintance would speak to you," Liu Jiewei, general office director of the PSB's Exit-Entry Administration said. He added that when a person receives an SMS from an unknown number asking for money, the person should confirm the request through a face-to-face meeting or at least a phone call. This is to verify the identity of the other party. He also cautioned citizens to be skeptical of text messages that announce the receiver has won money.

UN sees China as world growth 'locomotive'

By Huang Daochen

The country's gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to drop to 8.4 percent this year from last year's 9.1 percent, but it will remain Asia's "locomotive" for global economic growth, according to a recent forecast released by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in China.

In the UN report, titled "World Economic Situation and Prospects 2009," analysts said the nation's economic indicator might slide to 7 percent in the worst case if the global financial crisis lingers. They put the high end of the forecast at 8.9 percent.

In contrast, the global econ-

omy is forecast to grow by just 1 percent this year, down from 2.5 percent last year. The US economy would decline 1 percent and Europe 0.7 percent, compared with the 2008 growth of 1.2 percent and 1.1 percent, respectively, according to the UN report.

The report said China accounted for about 22 percent of global growth in 2008 and will likely contribute more this year, as most developed economies are falling into a recession.

"It is beyond doubt that China will play a more important role in the world economy as the US and Japan experience setbacks," Wang Tongsan, an econ-

omist with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said.

The global decline would have been bigger without China's continued strong expansion, he said.

But the report said China needs new strategies to sustain growth in the face of a severe drop-off in demand for exports.

In the past few years, the robust global growth was driven to an important extent by strong consumer demand in the US. Growth has traditionally been highly dependent on manufacturing exports for industrialized countries' consumption.

The pattern of growth turned out to be unsustainable, and the

decline in export demand in the US and Europe has weakened growth in most economies in Asia, including China, the report said.

But with US \$1.95 trillion (13.3 trillion yuan) in foreign exchange reserves and a balanced government budget, China still has room to adopt more expansionary fiscal policies, the report said. The country has already announced a US \$586 billion stimulus package to boost its growth.

Following China's model, the report calls for more countries to adopt massive fiscal stimuli in order to counteract a highly synchronized global downturn.

British Council celebrates work in China

By Jackie Zhang

"2008 was a year in which we certainly achieved a great deal, but was really just a stepping stone for us to achieve more in the coming year," Martin Davidson, chief executive officer of the British Council, said Tuesday. "This does not mean that we've reached the top of a mountain and then things will go down from there. It's just a resting place and we'll continue to climb the mountain."

Davidson, who has 16 years' experience working on the mainland and Hong Kong, became the council's global CEO in 2007. He said 2008 was the busiest year ever for British Council China and he visited the country this week to celebrate the council's achievements here.

"I first came to Beijing in 1984 as an extremely young British Council officer," Davidson said. "I was coming to a country which so few of us knew anything about. Now I have the opportunity to come back to Beijing as the chief executive and see the huge changes, not just in the city but also, in the way in which our organization works here."

A registered charity, the British Council has operated as an executive non-departmental public body since 1934. This year, the organization's 75th anniversary, Davidson is delighted that the British Council's work in China has bore fruit.

"After the British Council's foundation, we only operated in two countries. Now we are working in 110 countries, with 112 million people across the world," Davidson said.

"When I first came to work in Beijing, I was one of six people working at the culture and education section. Now there are more than 100 people working there," he said. "When I first came here, we worked within the Third Ring Road. Now we work across the country. When I first came here, we worked on just a small number of scholarship schemes and a small number of arts events. Now we work across a huge range of activities – in education, the sciences, English language, testing, the arts – all of which do not just take place here in China, but which also brings a different view of China to people back in the UK."

Many of the council's activities will be strengthened in the new year, such as those on culture, the English language, education and the sciences, said Robin Rickard, the council's first secretary for culture and the sciences. New events will also be established to encourage people involved in helping disabled people, as well as cultural exchanges with other Chinese cities.

"A cultural relationship does not only focus on enterprises, governments or institutions, but people. This makes people become closer to each other and explores the similarities and differences in cultures," Davidson said.

Ambassadors celebrate the festival



A temple fair to celebrate the upcoming Chinese Spring Festival was held on Sanlitun Beixiaojie last Sunday. The fair attracted many ambassadors to participate.

CFP Photo

Rice donated to Kenyan orphans

By Venus Lee

A rice donation ceremony for Kenyan orphans was held Tuesday by the Embassy of Kenya, China Aging Development Foundation and Yiyang Group. The event aimed to help orphans adopted by Sarah Hussein Obama, grandmother of the new US President, and called for more aid for African children.

Sarah Obama, 87, has adopted more than 80 orphans, aged 4 to 18, from local villages. Most of the children lost their parents to HIV/AIDS.

Kenya recently declared a national emergency due to drought and famine that has left nearly 10 million Kenyans without food. The living conditions of Kenyan orphans aroused concern among their sponsors, and so they came up with a food donation drive.

"Kenya's people are seriously suffering from starvation. We held

the activity on the same day as President Obama's inauguration in order to call on more people to care about them, and we also hope President Obama can be as philanthropic as his grandmother," Zhao Xiaokai, one of the organizers, said.

Julius Ole Sunkuli, Kenya's ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary, received over 100 tons of rice on the occasion. "I am so happy that the Chinese people know Mama Sarah (Obama). She would be very glad to know that many Chinese people support her work after she returns from President Obama's inauguration," he said.

"The activity was very touching. It was not only a donation; it was proof of the friendship between Kenyan and Chinese people," Marco Di Capua, energy counselor of the US Embassy, said.



The ambassador of Kenya viewing a painting donated to Sarah Obama.

Photo by Venus Lee

NGO teaches skills to develop arts education

By He Jianwei

Wearing orange T-shirts, 20 migrant children and 10 artist-teachers portrayed animals in a forest during a rehearsal at the National Center for the Performing Arts (NCPA). The event last Friday was part of a creative dance and theater workshop organized by Hua Dan, a non-profit organization, and the Birmingham Royal Ballet.

The workshop, which ran from January 12 to 16, discussed teaching methodology and skills to develop arts education in local communities, and to help students in migrant schools develop confidence.

Through a public recruitment program, the British Council selected 10 artist-teachers to work with a group of children, aged 7 to 9, from Xing Zhi Migrant School. Meanwhile, the Birmingham Royal Ballet and Hua Dan created an original dance and theater piece for them to perform based on David Bintley's ballet *Beauty and the Beast*.

During the workshop, the artist-teachers were given opportunities to analyze and discuss the teaching process used among groups of people who usually do not have access to such lessons. All teachers who participated in the workshop work in either dance or education, and have done art education.

Fu Dan, one of the organizers, has organized theater workshops in areas struck by last May's earthquake in Sichuan Province. She believes dance is a good way to communicate with children who have experienced severe trauma. "Through the five-day workshop, I learned how to help children through dance and theater," she said.

"I hope to learn how to organize a workshop for students to help them build confidence and reduce pressure," Huang Jie, a teacher at No 3 Middle School affiliated with the Beijing Normal University, said. She has already organized a theater group in her school that helps students understand and communicate with each other.

The NGO Hua Dan is a pioneer in the use of participatory art methodologies as a tool for building soft skills among China's rural and urban migrant population. It became involved in this program in 2004.

Hua Dan's staff uses a variety of theater forms in their workshops, namely advanced role-playing, improvisation, creative games and exercises and storytelling. "The workshops act as a way to educate and inspire around a range of issues, as well as provide a forum for participants to come together and contribute to solutions for a better future," Caroline Watson, founder and director of



Teaching artists play with students from the Migrant School after rehearsals at the National Center for Performing Arts.



Staff from Hua Dan and Birmingham Royal Ballet teach students to play *Beauty and the Beast* in Xing Zhi Migrant School.

Photos by Li Yan

Hua Dan, said.

Hua Dan runs programs in migrant schools in Beijing, works on women's empowerment issues, and is currently running a program in Sichuan as part of earthquake rehabilitation efforts. More than 5,000 children in Sichuan have participated in the group's workshops.

The attitude to dealing with children was a key issue in the dance and theater workshop. Huang, the middle school teacher, believes children need to develop strong self-respect, but she once made a mistake in her theater group.

While the group was rehearsing a

play, she asked one student to perform the leading role, which kept other students out of the spotlight. Some complained about the unfairness and refused to participate anymore.

"From this workshop, I learned that we must respect every student and tell them each is equally important," Huang said.

At the end of the workshop at NCPA, migrant children, along with their teachers, performed for special guests. This was an invaluable experience for the youngsters as it was the first occasion migrant children literally "took the stage" at such a prestigious venue.

Event

New Year card designing competition

Use Macintosh computers to design New Year cards to send to family and friends. Attendees will get help from the store's trainers, and a small gift. The audience will select the card with the best design, and the winner will receive a prize.

When: January 24, 4 pm

Where: Apple Store, the Village at Sanlitun, Building 19, Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District

Tel: 6419 8900

Cost: Free

Fairy Tale Puppet Show: The Emperor's New Clothes

"The Emperor's New Clothes," a fairy tale by Danish poet and author Hans Christian Andersen, is about an emperor who unwittingly hires two swindlers to create a new suit for him. The tale, first published in 1837, is one of Andersen's most popular and often appears in collections of his work and illustrated storybooks for children. The tale has been adapted for animated film, television and the stage.

When: January 25, 10:30-11:30 am

Where: China Puppet Theater, 1A Anhua Xi Li, Beisanhuan Lu, Chaoyang District

Tel: 6417 7845

Cost: 100, 150 and 200 yuan (only 100 yuan for students)

Essential Modern Dance by the Israel Ballet

The program presents three of the Israel Ballet's classic repertoires. It is the country's only ballet company that performs world classical and neo-classical ballets. It was founded in 1967 by Berta Yampolsky and Hillel Markman who have remained its artistic directors.

When: January 30, 7:30-9 pm

Where: National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

Tel: 6417 7845

Hike: Big Black Mountain to the Walled Village

The hike's highlight is the Walled Village, converted from an army barracks that used to house soldiers who guarded the Great Wall. Along the way, participants will have a view of The Wall, the surrounding mountains, old pines, terraces and orchards. The route will wind through an abandoned army storehouse and a mysterious mine tunnel.

Reservations are essential. Participants can book by phone, email or through the organizer's Web site. The site contains photos of previous hikes and departure times and places of upcoming hikes. Organizers will supply water and snacks, but participants should bring lunch. The fee also covers the cost of transportation and guide services.

When: February 1, 8:30 am - 5 pm

Tel: 13910025516

Cost: 250 yuan

Web site: beijinghikers.com

Beijing International Ice Hockey Club

The club, founded in the early 1990s, plays every Sunday at the Beijing Hosa Rink. With five teams and almost 100 players from around the world, it joins annual competitions around Asia and hosts tournaments.

Practices are Thursdays at 8:30 pm, and there is a weekday game on Houhai. Registration is required for the Sunday games.

When: January 22, 7 pm

Where: Hosa Rink, 8 Xinglongjie, Chaoyang District

Contact: beijinghockey.com or peking_puck@yahoo.com

Cost: 15 yuan on weekends, 10 yuan on weekdays

(By Wei Ying)

Network for new expats

By Annie Wei

The Beijing International Newcomers' Network (INN) hosted an event this week to discuss with its members Chinese New Year culture and traditions.

Established in 1994, INN is one of the first expat communities in town. It has 1,000 members with more newcomers signing up, Mary Peng, the group's communication coordinator, said.

Peng said she joined INN as a volunteer in 2004. The network provides first-timers to China basic living information such as where to shop, where to see a doctor, how to open a bank account, how to find an ayi and where to get a cellphone, she said.

"We have members of all ages, from 20 to 75. It's not just for expat housewives. In fact, many students who come to China for the first time find it a useful

social network," Peng said.

INN meetings are open to all foreign passport holders living in town and are normally held in the morning.

INN activities for February Big Brekkie

INN hosts a breakfast every second Wednesday of the month where attendees can socialize with old friends and newcomers in a relaxed setting.

When: February 11, 10 am - 12 noon

Where: Schindler's Anlegestelle, 10 Sanlitun Bei Xiaojie, Chaoyang District

Tel: 6463 1108

Cost: 60 yuan for the buffet breakfast

Neighborhood Coffee Morning

This is a social event held in a cafe, which allows newcomers to meet people in their neighborhood and to pick up a

few tips from "old hands."

When: February 17, 10 am - 12 noon

Where: The Bookworm, Building 4, Nan Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District

Tel: 6586 9507

When: February 19, 10 am - 12 noon

Where: O'Brien's, 6 Riverville Square, Tianzhu, Shunyi District

Tel: 6450 8588

General Monthly Meeting

At its monthly meeting next month, INN will host a talk titled "Travel in China."

When: February 23, 10 am - 12 noon

Where: The Capital Club Athletic

Center, Jingcheng Dasha Julebu, 3/F, Low Rise Capital Mansion, 6 Xinyuan Lu,

Chaoyang District

Tel: 8486 2225 ext 136

Cost: 40 yuan

Super marathon comes to town, register now

By Zheng Lu

The country's longest marathon will be held in April, with the starting line at the foot of the Juyongguan Great Wall. Covering a distance of 100 kilometers, more than double the Olympic marathon's 40 kilometers, the run will be the longest ever held in Beijing and in China.

This super marathon is sponsored by The North Face sports gear company. The same race was held in Australia, Singapore and the Philippines last year, and is based on international endurance races such as Europe's Ultra Trail du Mont Blanc and the US's Endurance Challenge.

Changping District, where the race will be held, was

chosen for its historical and cultural sights, said Du Guoliang, secretary of the Changping Sports Bureau. The area is suitable for outdoor activities and the terrain will surely test the athletes' endurance, he said.

The route will wind through country roads, streams, rocky paths and pass through the Ming Tombs. The finish line will be at the Ming Tomb Reservoir, the venue of the Olympic Games' triathlon competition.

Though it is the first time such a marathon will be held in the country, the Great Wall and Ming Tombs have long lured some of the world's top long-distance runners to come here.

Dean Karnazes, a top endurance runner from the US, is sure to come. In the last few years, he has won a number of arduous races held in various environments, including deserts and high and low-temperature areas. He once ran through all of the US's 50 states in 50 days. Also expected to participate is Elizabeth Hawker, a British environmental scientist and long-distance runner. She won the Ultra Trail du Mont Blanc last year.

Amateur runners will not be left out of the excitement. Apart from the 100-kilometer race, there will be two shorter routes: 40 and 10 kilometers.

Registration for the April 25 race has opened. The

number of participants to the 100-kilometer super marathon is limited to 80, while the 40-kilometer and 10-kilometer runs will take 1,000 and 2,000 people, respectively.

Each event has different qualifications: To get into the 100-kilometer race, athletes are required to have participated in the Beijing Full Marathon and finished it within the appointed time. For the 40-kilometer one, participants should have taken part in at least half a marathon.

Interested parties can register at thenorthface100.com.cn or sign up at The North Face's store in the Village at Sanlitun. All participants will receive guidance from the shop's endurance running experts.

ASK Beijing Today

Email your questions to: weiyi@ynet.com

I need to get to the airport early on Sunday. What time can I catch the first bus or subway?

Airport shuttle buses start operating at 6 am from locations like Gongzhufen, Xindian Minhang Dasha and the Beijing Railway Station. The Airport Express Subway starts at 6 am as well. If your flight is before 8 am, we suggest you take a cab.

I've heard my Chinese colleagues talk about a festival called Xiaonian. What is it?

Xiaonian, literally "small year," occurs on the 23rd or 24th day of the last month of the lunar year. It is a day to bid farewell to the Kitchen God, who is regarded as the guardian of the family hearth. According to legend, the god leaves the house on the 23rd day to report to heaven on the family's behavior and returns on the first day of the new year. On the eve of the 23rd, the family gives the god a ritual farewell dinner of sweet food and honey.

I live near Zhongguancun and heard about a second-hand electronics market in the Liangmaqiao area. What is it called? Where is it exactly?

You are talking about the Nuren Jie Used Goods Market, which sells some electronic goods. The entrance to the street is directly across the new US Embassy, and the market is all the way down on the right-hand side. Note that most of the small shops will be shut during the Spring Festival, and will likely not open until after February 10.

I will spend Spring Festival with my Chinese boyfriend and his family who live in Haidian District. I want to get them some flowers for the holiday, but do not know any flower markets in Haidian.

Below are several flower markets you can check out: Wanlong Huahui Market (47 Beisanhuan Xi Lu, Haidian District); Lihuayu Huahui Sales Center (Zone A 1-3, Zhongsu Dasenlin Huahui Shichang, Haidian District).

Where can I buy cheaper but quality electronic products during Spring Festival?

Besides Zhongguancun, Gome and Dazhong, Pawnshops are also worth a visit. One of the leading pawnshops, Huaxia Pawnshop, said they are giving a 20 percent discount during the holiday. Its main store's number is 6708 1818 (A-201, Xincheng Wenhua Dasha, Chongmenwai Wai Dajie, Chongwen District).

(By Wei Ying)



Super marathon at Ultra Trail du Mont Blanc last year
Photo provided by The North Face

20 parks open during Spring Festival

By Annie Wei

Not everyone who stays in town for the Spring Festival wants to spend their break watching TV at home. As a city with a rich history and cultural heritage, there are many places in Beijing that will hold interesting activities during the holiday. Below are some recommendations from *Beijing Today*.

Beihai Park

It will hold *qifu*, the traditional Qing Dynasty ceremony of welcoming the new year, which prays for fortune and happiness. Park authorities said they will present Emperor Qianlong's version of the ceremony.

Where: 1 Wenjin Jie, Xicheng District

When: January 23 – February 1

Cost: 5 yuan

Beijing Daguanyuan (Grand View Garden)

The garden is not only the namesake but a replica of the magnificent imperial family garden described in *A Dream of Red Mansions* by Qing-dynasty author Cao Xueqin. The garden's 14th Red Mansion Festival will show visitors the lifestyle of that long-gone era.

Where: 12 Nancaiyuan, Xuanwu District

When: January 26-30

Cost: 20 yuan

The Summer Palace

It will hold an imperial-style celebration of the new lunar year with performances of Peking Opera, traditional musical instruments, acrobatics and imperial dances.

Where: Liulizhuang, Haidian District

When: January 26 – February 9

Cost: 20 yuan



Ditan Park, one of the most visited venues during Spring Festival

CFP Photo

Ditan Park

The park is known for its varied folk culture activities.

Where: Jia 2 Andingmen Wai Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: January 25 – February 1

Cost: 10 yuan

Yuyuantan Park

It will showcase agricultural products grown in more environmentally-friendly ways.

Where: 47 Sanlihe Lu, Haidian District

When: January 10-30

Cost: 5 yuan

Maliandao tea fair

Local tea experts will introduce tea culture to all visitors. It will also offer tea tasting.

Where: 11 Maliandao Lu, Xuanwu District

When: January 26-30

Cost: free

Yanqing Xiadu Park

Visitors can come here to skate.

Where: Chengguan Zhen, Yanqing County

When: January 1-30

Cost: 15 yuan

Sink or swim

Young designers return to fashion their future

By He Jianwei

The courtyard southwest of the National Art Museum is a contemporary art gallery called Goncharova Gallery. From January 9 to 16, the gallery held its first fashion design exhibition. Three young Chinese designers who studied abroad and came home last year showed their designs in three exhibition rooms of the *siheyuan*.

The designers are confident about their return and have devoted themselves to Chinese fashion design. But the domestic market is not as prosperous as they had estimated. Faced with reality, they balance art and business as they try to design for the future.



Zhang Chi

Several black close-fitting suits with embroidery were exhibited in the south room of the gallery. If the suit were not being worn by a man, it would be difficult to tell for which gender it was designed. Neutral beauty prevails in this designer's work.

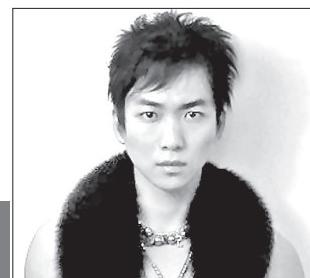
Zhang Chi came back to China on August 2008 and launched his label Chi Zhang to focus on men's clothes.

Zhang stayed abroad longest among the three designers. He went to the UK in 2000 for high school and got his bachelor's degree from the University of Huddersfield in West Yorkshire, England. Then he went to Italy for a master's program at the Istituto Marangoni in Milan.

In college, Zhang was open-minded about aesthetics. "The professors in the UK will not teach you what is beautiful," Zhang said.

During this period, he was influenced by John Galliano, who identifies his love of theater and femininity as central to his creations. The British fashion style made Zhang focus on details. For example, he will use voile on the sleeves despite it being a material typically used in female clothes.

When Zhang studied in Milan, he found that there was a strict tradition of aesthetics in Italy's fashion field. "Italy has its own traditional aesthetics that you just have to accept," he said.



Conforming to local tastes

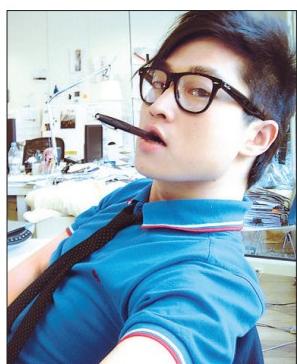
Black is Zhang's favorite color for his clothes, and all are cut to fit close. "In Italian fashion, most men's suits are black and close-fitting, and I think these two features in suits are most beautiful," he said.

In summer of 2007, Zhang went back to London and put some clothes in his friend's shop to test the market. "It was a surprise to me that the British bought my clothes," he said. Currently, three shops sell his designs in the UK.

His best seller in the UK is the waistcoat. "It has no sleeves and I can make it an average length so more people can wear it," he said.

Zhang opened a studio in Jianwai SOHO after he returned last year. But he found the market in China is smaller than in the UK. Most of the consumers in the UK are 20 to 40 years old. But in China, his customers are entertainers and artists. "The concept of beauty is different between China and Britain. In China, people hesitate to wear my clothes. Some people probably think them improper to wear to work," he said, a problem he is still working to solve.

To make profit, he still sells his clothes in the UK. "My clothes exported to the UK have gone into mass production and I hope not only artists wear my clothes, but also young people who are sensitive to fashion," he said.



Thomas Lee

Optimistic about Chinese fashion

Zhang Chi's and Fan Ran's use simple colors, but Thomas Lee makes his dresses colorful.

Five years ago, at the Suzhou Art and Design Technology Institute, Lee got an opportunity to be a transfer student to Paris. He stayed in Ecole Duperre and Studio Bercot for five years and came home last September.

Lee believes his five years in Paris revolutionized his concept of fashion.

After he came back to China, Lee decided to make his own label. "There is great potential in China for fashion develop-

ment, and I hope I can be part of its future," Lee said.

But because of funding problems, he postponed his plan. Now he works for the Italian brand Cecilia Bilanci. "I need time to adjust to domestic surroundings," he said.

Between art and business, Lee insists that his designs depend on 70 percent from his ideas and 30 percent from the choice of market.

Lee is optimistic about the domestic market and consumers. "The market and consumers will mature quickly. Maybe sooner than what we imagine," he said.





Photos provided by Zhang Chi, Fan Ran and Thomas Lee



Fan Ran

Watching and waiting

Opposite of Zhang Chi's showcase is Fan Ran's. Her combination of fashion with architecture makes her design stand out.

After the exhibition, one of her dresses was ordered by a client. The exhibition was her first time to show off her works in China since she returned last October.

Fan graduated at Academy of Arts and Design of Tsinghua University in 2006 and went to Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design (CSM) in London.

At CSM, Fan's concept of fashion changed completely. "The two years at CSM opened my mind. I did not know what high fashion was before," Fan said.

During those two years Fan studied hard because of the fierce competition in the college. Some of her classmates failed to pass. "I have more freedom in my study. For example, professors never give any titles for your dissertation," she said.

The CSM is located in the heart of London, known for punk, prostitutes and homosexuals. "When I went to buy materials or have a cup of coffee, people on the streets and in coffee bars wore punk or goth styles to stand out," she said.

When she learned she was allergic to building materials, Fan gave up her major in architecture. "As I walked into the world of fashion design, I thought about how I could bring architecture into dress. Constructing a house is like making a dress: it includes planning, sketching, producing and decorating," she said.

When she came back last October, she opened a studio and started her Ran Fan label. She found a position as a teacher in a design school. "I studied a lot last year and found it is hard for independent designers to earn a profit in China. So teaching can guarantee my salary and I can run my studio in my spare time," she said.

Last year, she went to Shanghai and visited some independent designers. She found most invested in their own shops, but rarely made a profit. "Most have the support of investors, but who knows when that will vanish. The economy is in a recession, so I think it is risky to open shop in Beijing," she said.



Yale author chosen as Obama's poet

By Charles Zhu

Following in the footsteps of Robert Frost, Miller Williams and Maya Angelou, Elizabeth Alexander, a black poet and professor at Yale University, read her work at the inauguration of President Barack Obama.

"Too many people have seen too much and lived to tell, or not tell, or tell with their silent, patterned bodies, their glass eyes, gone legs, flower-printed flesh," she sang in *American Sublime* (96pp, Graywolf Press, US \$11.20), a collection of her poetry.

In *American Sublime*, Alexander gives vent to the outcries, dreams and histories of an African American tradition that goes back to the slave rebellion on the Amistad and to the artists' poetic landscape of nineteenth-century America. In personal poems, historical narratives, jazz riffs, sonnets, elegies and a sequence of *ars poetica*, *American Sublime* is Alexander's most influential and varied collection and wins her place as one of America's most active and talented writers.

Critics said "Alexander is an unusual thing, a sensualist of history, a romanticist of race. She weaves biography, history, experience, pop culture and dream. Her poems make the public and private dance together."

She was born in 1962 in Harlem, New York, raised in Washington DC, and attended Yale University, where she now teaches African-American studies. Her published collections of poetry include *American Sublime*, which was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, *Antebellum Dream Book* (2001), *Body of Life* (1996) and *The Venus Hot-*

tentot (1990).

Her "poems bristle with the irresistible quality of a world seen fresh," and she has an "instinct for turning her profound cultural vision into one that illuminates universal experience."

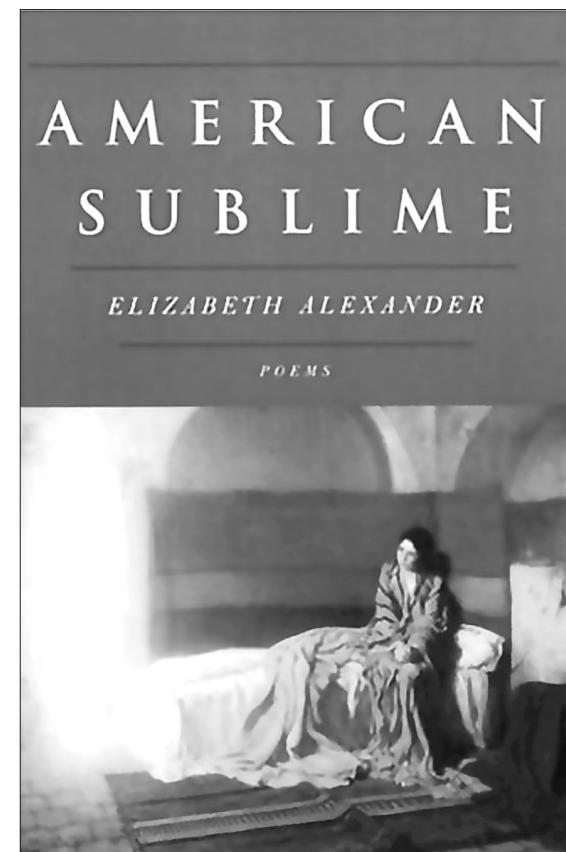
"What I want to do in the composition of the poem is to be very quiet and very humble before the forces that make me able to write poems," she said in a recent interview speaking of the inaugural poetic reading.

"It's a very, very big challenge," she added. "It's a very extraordinary moment. And I think the fact that Barack Obama has decided that he wants to have a poem as part of the inaugural is tremendously significant, to say that here is a time when we can listen to language that shifts us a little bit, that allows us to pause for a moment and contemplate what's ahead of us, to think about how we can contribute to the challenges ahead of us, all of those things can be possible in the moment of pause and shift that – that a poem makes possible."

The civil rights movement has come not to total fruition, but at least to a moment where the world can stop and say some remarkable progress has been made, she said.

She said she would approach her reading in the way she always approaches her poems: speaking clearly and artfully.

When there is an audience beyond one, she said the poem takes on its own life and connects with its audience in a way the reader cannot control. "That's not to say that millions are the same as one, but it is to



say that the process is the same; that you're still asking for something from your creative forces."

She said that poetry is one of the ways that people tell the story of who we are, of who they are. "If you look at praise songs in various African countries, if you look at *The Canterbury Tales*, if you look at *The Odyssey*, these are all ways that people have said in verse: This is who we are. This is our story. This is how we came to this moment," she said.

She was surprised to be asked to read at the inauguration of President Obama. The president's own use of language and respect for has been evident, and he is aware of the kind of power language has and aware of the kind of care with which people ought to try to speak to each other, she said.

Alexander made friends with Barack and Michelle Obama when both were teaching at the University of Chicago in the 1990s.

Into the soul of the running novelist

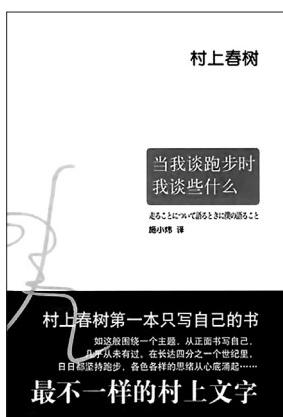
By Wang Yu

From the bookstalls almost 20 years ago – full of vulgar pop literature – to the well-decorated downtown modern apartment, Haruki Murakami's books are a staple of the petty bourgeois. His sensitive words, a vision of fancy, have attracted young readers from the country's urban centers.

This month the Chinese edition of Murakami's *What I Talk about When I Talk about Running* (198pp, Nanhai Press, 25 yuan) was published. It is the first Murakami book released by the new copyright holder since the writer's work was taken over by Shanghai Translation Publishing House and the translator Lin Shaohua earlier this decade.

"It's a simple and unadorned book with no literary showing off, which may mean it will be uninteresting to those who are not interested in the novelist himself," said Shi Xiaowei, the new Murakami translator.

Most Murakami fans know that the novelist is also a long-distance runner. He started run-



ning when he was 33, in 1982, and ran an average of 10 kilometers per day the last few years. So far, Murakami has finished 25 marathons including a 100-kilometer "ultra-marathon."

But it is not a book just about Murakami's history of running. It also reveals his life since he pursued writing on April 1, 1978 at 29 years old. At the end of the book, the writer said that he hopes to read the following words on the gravestone after he crosses the ultimate line of life:

Haruki Murakami, 1949-20**, Writer (and Runner), At Least He Never Walked.

Rather than a hobby or a way to keep fit, he views running as training in tenacity, persistence and concentration. "Most of what I know about writing I've learned through running every day," he wrote in the book. Running requires a writer's talent. Some born writers may have been recognized for their bursts of creativity early in life.

But for those who are not geniuses, learning to focus is the most important thing, Murakami said. "Writing articles is mental labor. Dealing with a full-length novel it's rather a physical job," he said in the book. The loneliness of running is also synonymous with that which a writer will face when he is on his spiritual journey for a story.

"Murakami once told me that his motive in writing is to set the soul free," said Lin Shaohua, who has translated 32 of Murakami's works into Chinese. It's the Japanese writer's first

memoir and revived debate about the change in translators. "I started the Chinese translation just for fun, I hadn't hoped it would be published," Shi said. Like Lin, Shi first read Murakami's *Hear the Wind Sing* when he was studying at Waseda University.

A comparison between the literary styles of the two translators is inevitable. "As a recreation, translation is a compromise between the translator's style and the original work. Everything should be built from an understanding of the novelist's original word, and I think my translation is accurate according to this principle," Shi said.

"A translator is a spy. You have to get to the deepest place of the author's soul to catch his feeling about the book," Lin said. "Everyone is a decoder, a good translation may hide behind the shape of the original words but shows its real spirit to the readers."

In the end, the meaning of the book falls on the reader's decoding of Murakami the runner.

Timezone8 book listing

Timezone8 is a Hong Kong-based publisher, distributor and retailer of books on contemporary art, architecture, photography and design. This week, it lists its three top-selling design books for *Beijing Today* readers.

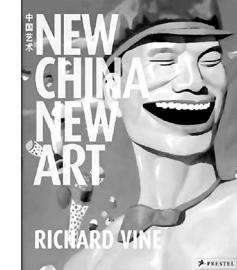
Performance: Richard Avedon



By John Lahr, Andre Gregory, Mike Nichols, Twyla Tharp, Mitsuko Uchida and Richard Avedon, 304pp, US \$75.00, Abrams

More than 200 celebrities are portrayed in *Performance*, many in photographs seen rarely or never before. The great stars light the way: Hepburn and Chaplin, Monroe and Garland, Brando and Sinatra. But here too are the actors and comedians, pop stars and divas, musicians and dancers, artists in all mediums with public lives that were essentially performances.

New China, New Art



By Richard Vine, 256pp, US \$60.00, Prestel USA

In this collection profiling the work of 80 of the most influential artists in China today, art critic Richard Vine offers a comprehensive, critical and highly illustrated assessment of the country's emerging role as a force in the contemporary art world.

Beijing 798 Now: Changing Art, Architecture and Society in China



By Cheng Lei and Zhu Qi, 400pp, US \$60.00, Timezone8

From industrial complex to international art district, the Beijing 798 area has become a symbol of urban change in China. This book covers the area's architects, artists, curators, critics, gallerists, publishers, art professionals and nonprofit workers, exploring issues that face the district today.

(By He Jianwei)

Desperate singles try 7-day shack up

Dress rehearsal

Single men and women have little time to date in the urban rush. "If people don't have enough time to get to know each other, it's hard for them to walk into a marriage," Situ Xingxing, one of the organizers of Seven-day Marriage, said.

A culture club initiated the activity on the Internet last June. It provides a place for unacquainted men and women to meet.

First, the participants will introduce themselves. Then they can talk with each other. After a one-hour meeting, everyone is asked to fill out a form naming their favorite person. If two people choose each other, they will be locked into a seven-day marriage.

The club will organize a simple wedding for the "bride" and "bridegroom." Each will give 300 yuan for the "family" and the "bride" keeps 600 yuan for the expenses in the next seven days.

During those days they can date after work or on the weekend. They can dine out, see a movie, go to a park or go shopping. The bride is responsible for keeping account records.

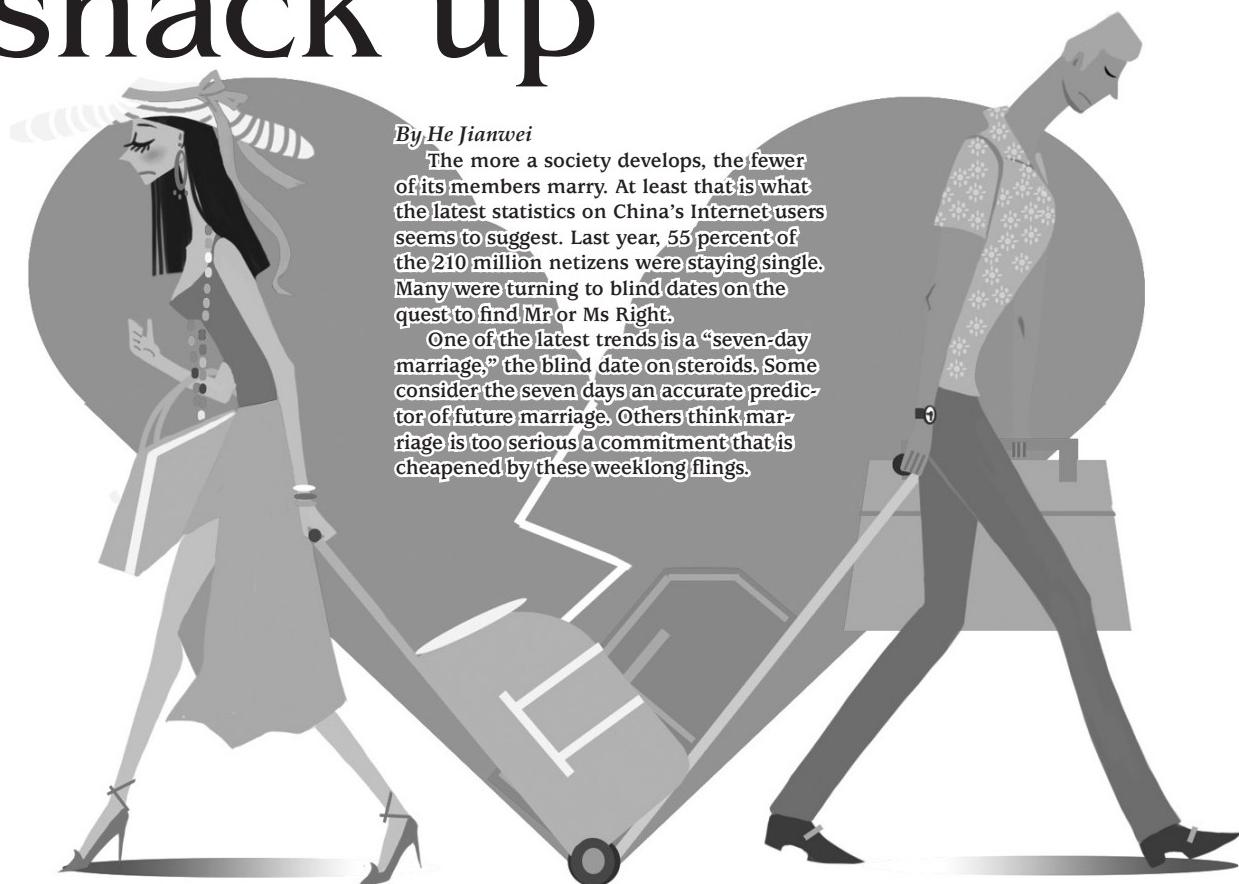
On the seventh day, they bring their certificate back to the club. The certificate will be voided, and it is up to the couple to decide whether or not to keep seeing each other.

They count how much money they spent on the seven days. If there is any remaining, the two will get to keep it. If they spend more than 600 yuan, then they will have to pay the difference.

"We hope that during those seven days single men and women can learn more about each other, especially how to tolerate and communicate with each other. It is like a marriage rehearsal," Situ said.

It takes time to get to know someone. If the couple is uncomfortable with each other in its first days, they have to work to find each other's good points. They can always break up on day seven.

"We tell everyone marriage is the pro-



By He Jianwei

The more a society develops, the fewer of its members marry. At least that is what the latest statistics on China's Internet users seems to suggest. Last year, 55 percent of the 210 million netizens were staying single. Many were turning to blind dates on the quest to find Mr or Ms Right.

One of the latest trends is a "seven-day marriage," the blind date on steroids. Some consider the seven days an accurate predictor of future marriage. Others think marriage is too serious a commitment that is cheapened by these weeklong flings.

cess of two spouses tolerating each other," she said.

Knowing your partner

The organizers held 30 activities in one month, and each was limited to seven men and seven women. A dozen or so people became "couples," the organizer said.

A nameless man, surnamed Liu, broke up with his "wife" on day seven. They had watched a movie and went dancing. "We were good friends for seven days. The title 'couple' was just a joke. It gave us opportunity to know more about each other," he said.

But Lu Tu continued her relationship with her "husband." Lu, 30, is the manager of a joint-venture company. Mar-

riage has been a huge burden for her. "I missed the best time to find my Mr Right, because I put all my effort into my studies," she said.

As she got older, her parents kept urging her to get married. She heard about the seven-day marriage on the Internet and was curious to try.

"It just provides a platform for the people to meet, like eight-minute dates and other blind dates," she said.

Her boyfriend is a teacher in a college. They met through an activity. "Really, the seven-day marriage is a seven-day date which fosters love through the form of marriage," she said.

Chen Wei, another participant, broke up with her "husband," but said

she "learned how to manage a family's finances and got an idea what marriage is like."

Marriage no joke

Some people say the seven-day marriage is absurd. "Marriage is not a joke. That people can 'divorce' after seven days makes it seem too loose," a single woman surnamed Li said.

She worried that the organizers could not guarantee the moral characters of their participants. "It will just present players with a new opportunity," she said.

She also said the platform would cultivate a callous attitude toward marriage. "If they can divorce so easily, then they will expect the same in their future real marriage," she said.

CFP Photo

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BEIJING TODAY

Editor: He Jianwei Designer: Zhao Yan

How to be fashion royalty on the cheap

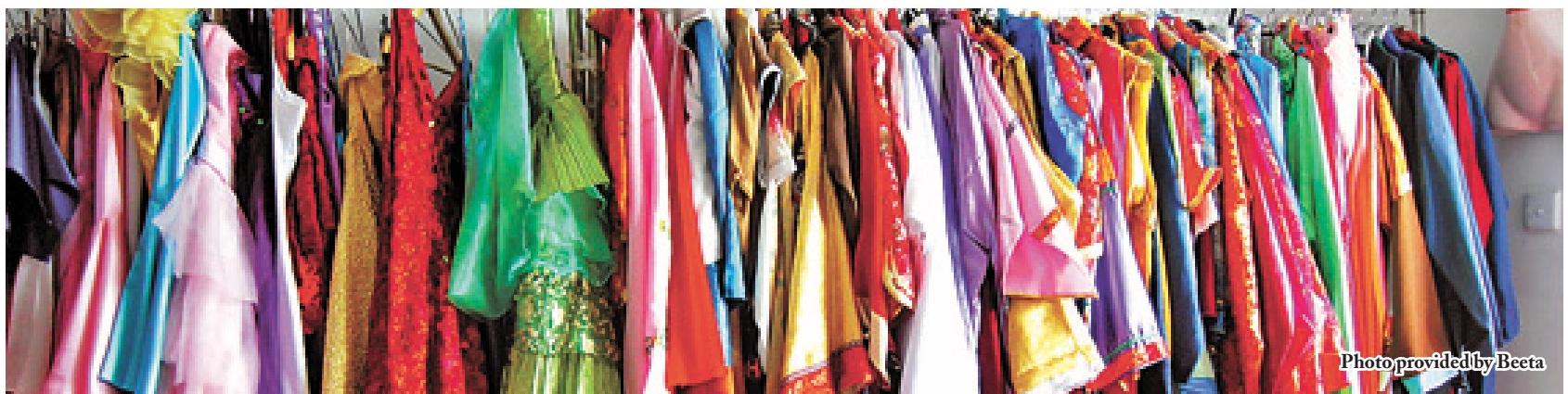


Photo provided by Beeta

Costumes for the whole family

Be they stylish formal wear, traditional foreign dresses or wacky costumes, all the clothes you can imagine – and those you could not have conceived of – can be found at Beeta

The shop, which also has branches in Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen, has more than a thousand clothes for rent, Sima Zidan, the shop manager, said. It has so many that Zidan admitted she does not have the exact number in their inventory. The collection includes 400 kinds of dresses –

some for formal occasions, some for performances and others for laughs.

In its holiday category, the shop has suits and headgear for special occasions like Christmas and Halloween. It also has cartoon costumes, including those of Mickey and Minnie Mouse, Kung Fu Panda and the five Fuwa.

On top of these, Beeta has theatrical costumes and all kinds of outfit for kids.

Among their most popular are European-style clothes, traditional Indian

dresses and formal evening wear, Zidan said. ("Customers) do not want to keep wearing the same costume," she said, thus the reason why Beeta is doing well.

The rental cost is between 60 and 400 yuan. Shorter dresses usually cost 60 to 150 yuan, while long gowns go for 80 to 300 yuan. Zidan said the cost is due to the extensive choice of designs that customers have, aside from the different sizes clothes the shop provides.

Zidan said customers can check out Bee-

ta's stocks through its Web site, then call the shop to make an order or to ask for suggestions. If customers fall in love with their rented outfit and want to keep it, the shop can make them a copy of it. The price is three to four times the cost of rental.

Beeta

Where: 808, 7 Baihuan Jiayuan,

Shuangjing Qiao, Chaoyang District

Open: 9 am – 6 pm

Tel: 6844 4222

Web site: beeta.cn



Photo provided by Gabriel

Chinese chic

Gabriel may be a new shop in town, but it is well-known in its birthplace of Tianjin. It made its name designing the outfit of the women who assisted at the awards ceremonies during the Beijing Olympics.

The shop specializes in formal wear and wedding dresses. Its designs are rich with Chinese elements, such as the use of silk and hand embroidery. One of its creations, a white silk evening gown, has a painting of a peony in rich colors on its bodice.

All of Gabriel's wedding dresses rent at an approximate cost of 800 yuan per piece a day. It has about 80 other pieces for rent that include evening gowns and tuxedos. Prices range from 200 to 800 yuan per day,

with tuxedos costing about 300 yuan. Its top quality items, however, are only for sale to prevent damage to the materials, Zhang Junqi, a sales staff, said. The shop also accepts made-to-order clothes.

Customers can view the shop's items online, then call to make an order. They can pick up their selections from the store at the appointed time.

Gabriel

Where: 802, Building C, Jiaduoliyuan, 19 Dongshan-huan Nan Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 9 am – 10 pm

Tel: 8766 5178

Web site: bj-gabriel.com

Celebrity favorite

"Maggie Chung is one of our regular customers," Daniel Zhang, head designer of Singapore-based Daniel Rebecca studio, said. Many Japanese and Korean actors and singers come here to rent evening wear for an awards ceremony or a cocktail party. Yes, stars also rent dresses, and they do not mind appearing in public in clothes that another artist has worn, Zhang said – as long as there is no doubling up at the same function.

Customers do not need to worry about seeing a twin at a big ball, since the shop only stocks one of each design. Daniel Rebecca has more than 600 formal wear in their closet – ladies' evening gowns as well as men's tuxedos.

Zhang, who has been a designer for more than a decade, believes in "simple luxury." "Our ideas as well as our textiles come from all over the world," said Zhang, who does freehand drawing on some of Rebecca Daniel's dresses.

Most of their clothes for rent are medium size. Some are bigger, especially those made with Westerners in mind. "Half of our customers are foreigners," Zhang said. But if customers cannot find their size in the design they want, the shop can make alterations – one of the other major service it provides.

People who are not sure what formal wear suits them need not worry, because the staff can offer suggestions.

Rental cost ranges from 100 to 800 yuan per day, depending on the quality and price of the dress. Zhang said the shop offers a discount to customers who rent clothes for longer than a day.

Daniel Rebecca

Where: 2207, Building 2, SOHO New Town, 88 Jianglu, Chaoyang District

Open: Daily except Sunday, 10 am – 7:30 pm

Tel: 5128 0974, 8589 2491



Photo provided by Daniel Rebecca

Comfort food for Valentine's Day

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Food



Old name, new flavors

Da Dong Roast Duck's reputation was earned by in its Tuanjiehu branch, but its new Nanxincang restaurant adds spice to the brand. Opened in the 1980s, Da Dong is hailed as one of the best roast duck restaurants in town.

But it offers more than duck. One of the latest items on its menu is the Braised Sea Cucumber (218 yuan small plate). The dish, which looks like a Chinese black and white painting, tastes a bit strong, but is appetizing nevertheless. The smooth and healthy Asparagus Cream Soup (218 yuan) is another dish worth trying.

Customers who are planning to visit Da Dong on Valentine's Day should be sure to reserve a table. "The worst experience for me was queuing almost one-and-a-half hours for a table," one diner told *Beijing Today*.

Dadong Roast Duck Restaurant

Where: 1-2F, Nanxincang International Plaza, 22A Dongshishitiao, Dongcheng District

Open: 11 am - 10 pm

Tel: 5160 0329

By Gan Tian

Valentine's Day is less than a month away and for sure, there are people crying out for a sweetheart to cuddle up with that day. But instead of sulking in a corner, singles can grab a friend or two with whom to share a heavenly meal.



Photo provided by 21cake

Irish coffee cake

Have you ever gotten drunk on cake? Cake company 21cake has created an Irish Coffee Cake (259 yuan for one pound) for bachelors and ladies who want something strong – like whisky – with their dessert.

Irish Coffee itself is borne of a love story. It is said that a bartender fell in love with a beautiful air hostess who paid regular visits to his pub. She would order different cups of coffee each time but would never ask for a cocktail, leaving the bartender with no way to make something for her. Finally, he came up with an idea: he combined coffee and Irish whisky and named it Irish Coffee.

21cake

Web site: 21cake.com

Tel: 6571 2266



Heart in a cake

Planning a Valentine Dinner is an art. Few things can top a candlelight dinner to set the mood for romance, except a dinner that ends with a heart-shaped dessert. On February 14, Bloo Dining will prepare a heart-shaped cake made of strawberries and white chocolate in its Valentine's set (598 yuan, subject to 15 percent service charge).

Park Plaza Beijing Wangfujing, which houses the restaurant, is also offering a Valentine package. The deal includes one night's stay at a deluxe suite, dinner for two at Bloo, breakfast the following morning and hotel limousine round-trip service. The package costs 1,399 yuan and includes a bottle of red wine.

Bloo Dining

Where: Park Plaza Beijing Wangfujing, 97 Jinbao Jie, Dongcheng District

Open: 6:30 am - 11 pm

Tel: 8522 1999

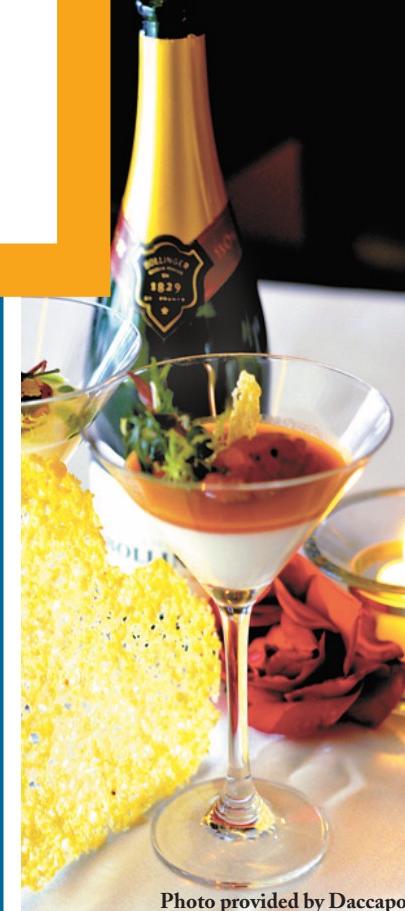


Photo provided by Daccapo

Violin music serenade

From the land of Romeo and Juliet and the birthplace of St Valentine comes a menu to celebrate love.

Daccapo, an Italian restaurant in the Regent Beijing Hotel, has prepared a Valentine menu, (688 yuan, subject to a 15-percent service charge), with its celebrated chef, Tobias Gensheimer. It starts off with Slow-cooked Veal Tenderloin, which has a strong barbecue flavor. It is followed by Wild Forest Mushroom Risotto with Smoked Duck Breast, Steamed Chilean Sea-bass with Scallops and Saffron or Crab and Lobster Ravioli with Olives and Tomatoes.

To cap it all off are strolling violin players, a complimentary glass of sparkling wine and a surprise gift.

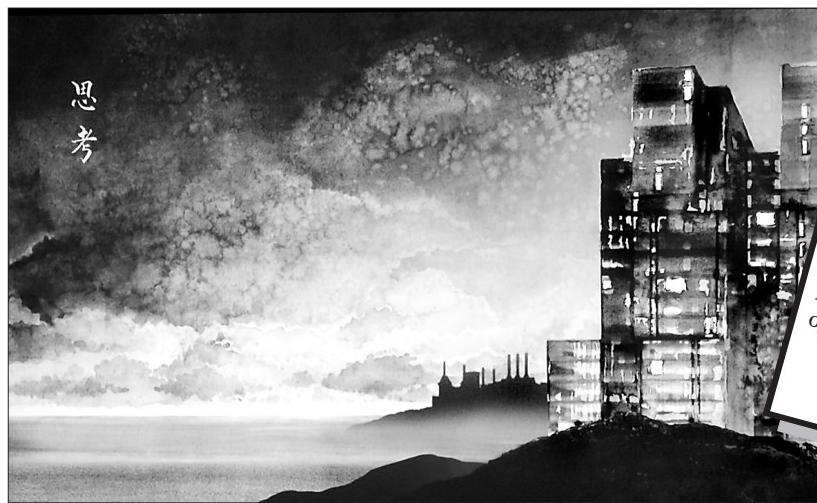
Daccapo

Where: 99 Jinbaojie, Dongcheng District

Open: 10 am - 10 pm

Tel: 8522 1789

Silence that stimulates imagination



By Li Jing

A large three-dimensional installation, a new animated film and a new series of black-and-white watercolors make up Belgian visual artist Hans Op de Beeck's first solo exhibition in China.

He called it Staging Silence "because all of the works are a reference to the staged image, which invites silence and reflection," Op de Beeck said. "I also wish to comment upon the ineptitude and insignificance of human beings in relation to our mortality, and the magnificence and endlessness of nature."

As before, the artist reduces the presence of color in his works, choosing to use mainly white.

The sculptural installation, named "Location (6)," is a vast snow-filled landscape. From a seated position, viewers look at the scene through a panoramic window, seeing a snowy expanse with bare trees. The landscape, the

observatory and its interior are all white.

Op de Beeck said he likes to use the color because it embodies silence, and the emptiness of the snowy scenery inspires viewers to think and reflect. Through these images, he said, he wants to contribute to the timeless discussion on the relationship between nature and human beings.

In his series of black-and-white watercolors, he also projected silence, making viewers feel a sense of detachment, escapism and loss of self.

The series features a variety of archetypes of infinity and transience, including watercolors of ruins, a post-war landscape, a view of the sea at night and an idyllic mountain scene: sites for meditation and reflection. Op de Beeck also presents contemporary architectural sites for mediation, such as the sterile departure lounge of an airport.

Upcoming

Nightlife DJ Terry Tu's Chinese year evening party

DJ Terry, who has already had a reputation for mix music, will play on the first evening of the first evening after the Spring Festival. He will also play his Ableton Live dance music. Apple Store has already had famous disc jockey Zhang Youdai's DJ night and Li Sisong's workshop. This is the third time it has invited a big name for a special event.

Where: Apple Store, Building 6, The Village at Sanlitun, Court 19, Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District
When: 8 pm, January 26
Admission: free
Tel: 6419 8900

These locations are perfect sites for letting go of human activity and identity, and becoming passive observers of life rather than participants.

As a multi-disciplinary visual artist, Op de Beeck uses media such as sculpture, animated films, videos, photographs, short stories and stage designs. He regards these as tools to help viewers absorb images. "Tools themselves are not important. Viewers' imagination and reflection are the objects of using different media," he said.

Staging Silence – Hans Op de Beeck Solo Exhibition

Where: Galleria Continua, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District
When: Until January 31, daily except Monday, 11 am – 6 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6436 1005

Stage in February

Concert

Choral Concert for the Chinese Lantern Festival
Who: Spring Choir of Beijing
Where: Beijing Concert Hall, 1 Bei Xinhua Jie, Xicheng District

When: February 8, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-880 yuan
Tel: 6605 7006

The Romantic Melody

Who: China Film Symphony Orchestra
Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Chaoyang District

When: February 14, 7:30 pm
Admission: 100-1,711 yuan
Tel: 6501 1854

Love in Spring

Who: Choir of the China National Symphony Orchestra
Where: Beijing Concert Hall, 1 Bei Xinhua Jie, Xicheng District

When: February 14, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-880 yuan
Tel: 6605 7006

Music Festival Opening Concert of the China Philharmonic Orchestra 2008-2009

Who: Conducted by Zhang Guoyong
Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Chaoyang District

When: February 22, 7:30 pm
Admission: 50-680 yuan
Tel: 6501 1854

Dance

Gala Show
Who: The Little Birch Tree Song and Dance Troupe of Russia
Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Chaoyang District

When: January 29-February 1, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-1,280 yuan
Tel: 6501 1854

Opera

Grand New Epic Peking Opera: Red Cliff
Who: Directed by Shi Hongtu
Where: National Grand Theater Opera Hall (west side of the Great Hall of the People), Xicheng District

When: February 5-10, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-600 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Beauty Xi Shi

Who: Wuxi Song and Dance Ensemble and Jiangsu Province's Ethnic Dance Ensemble
Where: National Grand Theater Opera Hall (west side of the Great Hall of the People), Xicheng District

When: February 12-14, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-580 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

A Sigh of Love

Who: Shanghai Ballet Company
Where: National Grand Theater Opera Hall (west side of the Great Hall of the People), Xicheng District

When: February 18-20, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-500 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

White-haired Girl

Who: Shanghai Ballet
Where: National Grand Theater Opera Hall (west side of the Great Hall of the People), Xicheng District

When: February 21-22, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-500 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

(By Li Jing)

5 Friday, January 23

Exhibition 2009 New Year Print Art Festival

Where: Amelie Art Gallery, (between Red Gate and White Space Gallery), 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until March 6, daily except Monday, 11 am – 7 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6530 7048

Still / Moving – Pierre Siedel Solo Exhibition

Pierre Siedel captures the expressions of strangers he comes across in the long corridors of Beijing's subway stations.

Where: Paris-Beijing Photo Gallery II, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until March 19, daily 10 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 8459 9263

Movie

The Curse of the Were-Rabbit

The first feature-length Wallace and Gromit film, it received the Best Animated Feature Award at the 2006 Oscars.

Where: Club Obiwan, 4 Xihai Xiyuan, Xicheng District

When: 8 pm

Admission: Free (including popcorn)

Tel: 6617 3231

Nightlife

The Rays + Cassette

With more than 10 years of rockin' and rollin' under their belts, local band The Rays take their music to D-22's stage, joined by Cassette.

Where: D-22, 242 Chengfu Lu, Wudaokou, Haidian District

When: 9 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6265 3177

6 Saturday, January 24

Exhibition Accumulation

On rotation at the gallery are the works of 13 artists – a commentary on contemporary culture as a process rather than the production of individual objects.

Where: Pekin Fine Arts, 241 Caochangdi, Chaoyang District

When: Until February 16, daily except Monday and Tuesday, 10 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 5127 3220

Liu Zhixin Solo Exhibition

Where: PIFO New Art Studios, B-07 Beijing International

Art Camp, Suojiacun, Cuigezhuang, Chaoyang District

When: Until February 20, daily 10 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6437 1792

The Rosy Clouds in the Sky

The works, by distinguished contemporary painters, portray the lives of various minority groups such as Tibetan, Uygur, Kazakh, Dai, Mongolian and Yi. This is part of the museum's permanent collection.

Where: National Art Museum of China, 1 Wusi Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: Until February 21, daily 9 am – 5 pm

Admission: 20 yuan

Tel: 6400 6326

Movie 8 Women

Where: French Culture Center, 1/F, Guangcail International Mansion, 18 Gongti Xi Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 7:30 pm
Admission: 10-20 yuan
Tel: 6553 2627

Nightlife Bad Apples

The California blues brothers put forth an eclectic combination of rock, reggae and blues.

Where: Lotus Blue (inside Lotus Lane), 51-56 Di'anmen Dong Dajie, Xicheng District

When: 9 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6617 2599

7 Sunday, January 25

Exhibition Enlightened Landscapes – Shi Jianjun Solo Exhibition

Where: Yuan Center of Art, 77 Zhengfusi, Zizhuyuan Lu, Haidian District

When: Until February 18, daily 11 am – 5 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 5272 1066

2025 Project – Wu Xiaojun Solo Exhibition

Where: Magician Space, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang

District

When: Until March 15, daily except Monday, 10:30 am – 7 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 8459 9635, 8709

3557

PIN – Videotheque Artists' Group Exhibition

This is the gallery's first show for 2009, an extension of its Videotheque project launched in September.

Where: ShanghART Beijing, 261 Caochangdi, Chaoyang District

When: Until February 22, daily except Monday, 11 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free
Tel: 6432 3202

Movie

Silver Medalist

An action-adventure that centers on the lives of express deliverymen, traffic cops and lonely beauties, this is another wacky movie by Ning Hao following the triumph of Crazy Stone.

Where: Cinemas around town

When: February 21-22, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-500 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

(By Li Jing)

An afternoon soak key to dispelling stress

Various forms of bath

1. Bubble bath

If you want to experience a romantic bubble bath like the actresses in idol dramas, you can create one yourself. Pour 10 to 15 milliliters of body lotion into the cask and switch on the water faucet full blast. The force of the water will create lots of glittering bubbles. The dreamlike bubble bath can help ease tension.

2. Milk bath

Many ladies yearn for Cleopatra's milk bath and want to experience it in a beauty parlor. If you have a wooden cask, you can fill it on your own at home. Add 2 to 3 liters of milk to the water and keep the temperature between 35 to 40 degrees. Milk is a natural moisturizer and anti-inflammatory agent. The bath will not only nourish your skin but also prevent it from drying out. It can repair irritation due to sun exposure and improve your sleep.

3. Petaline bath

Place 4 to 5 drops of essential oils in the cask and toss in some fresh rose petals. The steam mixed with the fragrance of rose and essential oils will permeate your whole body and make your skin supple, smooth, perfumed and revitalized. It can also improve blood circulation, balance internal secretions, speed up metabolism and slow down the aging process. There is a small catch here – the essential oils for baths are different from those used in massage. You have to make that clear before purchasing any.

4. Salt and yeast powder bath

Steep 50 grams of salt and yeast powder 10 minutes before bath. Salt helps to sterilize the water and yeast will break down body odor. This kind of bath is suitable for all skin types. It can remove dead skin cells and oils as it deep cleans the skin. It can also relieve the damages caused by daily exposure to minor radiation from computer screens.

5. Peels of fruits bath

Soak some orange, shaddock or lemon peels in the water and take a shower after that. You will find your skin is more nourished and brighter after absorbing the rich vitamins in the fruit peels. It will improve skin elasticity and prevent wrinkles if done regularly.

6. Olive oil and honey bath

Add 50 grams of honey and 30 grams of olive oil to the water and rinse after soaking. Olive oil is full of fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, F and K, which can be easily absorbed by the skin. It also helps the skin to hydrate and resist oxidization and ultraviolet radiation. The honey contains aminophenol acid and vitamins which can make your skin refined and nourished.

7. Chinese herbal bath

Herbal baths have a long history going back to the Three Kingdoms period. Their zenith of popularity was in the Tang and Song dynasties. Besides beauty uses, herbal baths can also treat some skin diseases and rheumatism, but you have to follow a professional herbalist's instructions.

By Venus Lee

Many children remember soaking in a wooden basin or cask as a child. An afternoon soak in a hot tub of water with the sun beating down is one of the most comfortable experiences.

These days, going back to older traditions is popular. Maybe it is time to kick off your high heels, put away your tie and try a bath from the past.

Zhao Xuyan, a trendy woman who works at a TV station, bought a wooden cask last week. "I am so stressed because of my job, so my beautician suggested that a milk or bubble bath would be a good way to relieve pressure," she said.

"The pressure of breast-deep water can massage the whole body. It helps promote circulation, lifts the metabolism, zaps away fatigue and guarantees sounder sleep," Zhou Qinglu, a health expert at the Municipal Exercise and Sports Sciences Institute, said.

You can soak first then clean, or clean first then soak. According to a spa treatment center, the regular procedure is to soak before cleaning since it ensures your skin completely absorbs any nutrients. Of course, you can do it vice versa. "Drink water to rehydrate your body before getting in the bath," she said.

Tips

1. Watch the water level

The water level should be chest-deep when you are seated. If it is higher than that, it could be dangerous – especially if you are prone to heart trouble. It is best to keep the water lever below the heart or it can cause a spike in blood pressure.

2. Keep the temperature moderate

Generally speaking, a temperature between 35 and 38 degrees is fine. If the temperature gets too high, the veins in your skin will dilate causing reduced blood flow to the brain. In pregnant women, the high temperature will trigger fetal oxygen deficit and harm the baby.

3. Don't soak too often

Once a week is often enough and you should not soak more than 30 minutes. If you take a bath every day, 5 to 10 minutes is the recommended duration. People who are overweight or who sweat a lot may need to wash more often. Elderly people who sweat less should soak less often.

4. Don't use alkaline soap

Use neutral or weakly acidic body lotion as much as possible. If you are not dirty, you can bathe even without using body wash.

5. Apply skin cream promptly

Apply skin cream while your skin is still moist. The sebaceous glands on your forearms, lower legs, waist and butt are limited, so apply more to these areas.



CFP Photos

A walkthrough of special temple fairs

By Zheng Lu

With the Year of the Ox only 48 hours away, the annual temple fairs are already set up and awaiting visitors. Apart from traditional fairs at the Temple of Earth and Changdian, new fairs have opened that blend local and non-Chinese elements. These places offer many wonderful activities that we cannot wait for the 48 hours to pass!



A temple fair specially for foreigners is held in Chaoyang Park every years.



It is time to win some gifts for the Spring Festival.
CFP Photo

Snacks of different flavors are one of the highlights of temple fairs. CFP Photo

Foreign influences at Shijingshan

The amusement park will carry on with its traditional events like the float parade and the foreign snacks street. A new highlight is an ice sculpture exhibition that is set to become the city's biggest indoors. Its European Carnival features Western music and dance by visiting European performers. It has organized a huge blind-date party for those who are looking for their valentine, and a photography competition that shutterbugs should not miss. On top of all these are the park's staple entertainment and recreation facilities.

When: January 25 – February 1

Where: Shijingshan Amusement Park, 25 Shijingshan Lu, Shijingshan District

Admission: 10 yuan for entrance (excluding activities); or a leisure package of 60 or 100 yuan

Tel: 6887 4060, 6887 3517



Foreign performers graced Chaoyang Park's temple fair last year.
CFP Photo

International Spring Carnival at Chaoyang Park

This is recommended for music and dance lovers who want to showcase their talents. The stage at the park's fountain square will be open to participants, and at stake is the title Karaoke King and a special prize. This year, the fair's spotlight will be on Russia, so there will be an area celebrating Saint Petersburg's Day. Visitors can have their photo taken with "Peter the Great." In addition, Africa, New Zealand and Slovenia have also been designated areas. Avid shoppers can look forward to the international folk art fair.

When: January 26-31

Where: Chaoyang Park, 1 Chaoyanggongyuan Nan Lu, Chaoyang District

Admission: 5 yuan for entrance

Tel: 6591 5258



Panning for treasure at Zhongguancun

The Zhongguancun area has become synonymous with "science and technology" in Beijing. Thus, it has not failed to bring technology to the temple fair concept. Apart from presenting acrobatics and Peking Opera, it will feature Counter-Strike and World of Warcraft video game competitions. There will be an exhibition of scientific apparatus, some of them interactive, that the entire family can enjoy. There are also games for office workers and a garden party for youngsters. Visitors who need a break can head to any of the surrounding restaurants. Old Beijing snacks are available at the plaza.

When: January 26-30

Where: Zhongguancun Plaza Shopping Street, 15 Zhongguancun Da Jie, Haidian District

Admission: Free

Tel: 8267 4011



...continued from page 20



Outing in early spring

Nature lovers or those with a green thumb will find The Beijing Garden of Flower's World a good escape from the urban jungle. It consists of seven greenhouses and 15 gardens that have become home to plants from various countries, including exotic flowers, herbs and fruits. During the Lunar New Year, the garden will have five major activities, with the lantern fair being the most awaited. *Beijing Today* suggests visitors stay until evening to see the lighting of the lanterns. A game of lantern riddles will be held in the Psammophyte Hall, and prizes await winning participants. There will also be an exhibit of peony and plum blossoms.

When: January 23 – February 1

Where: The Beijing Garden of Flower's World, Shijihuahui Daguan Yuan, 235 Nansihuan Zhong Lu, Fengtai District

Admission: 50 yuan for adults, 30 yuan for children

Tel: 8750 0721



Ice lanterns along the river

To see ice lanterns, Beijingers no longer need to travel out of the city. This spring, the Tongzhou Canal Park will hold its first ice lantern display – both in the open air and on the river. The Tongzhou Canal is the starting point of the Grand Canal, the world's first and longest artificial canal constructed in 486 BC. Ice sculptures include those of ancient ships, showing visitors their awesome appearance. With the addition of colorful lights, it is expected to be an extraordinary event.

When: January 22 – February 10

Where: Tongzhou Yunhe Gongyuan, Dongguan Da Qiao, Tongzhou District. (Take Bus 322 at Sihui, then get off Dongguan Da Qiao.)

Admission: Not decided

Tel: 8085 5509, 130 1182 8268



Foreign visitors at Temple of Earth Temple Fair

Cartoon temple fair for kids

Almost every child has a favorite cartoon character. This fair, organized by the Beijing Cartoon Museum, is the first especially designed for children. The puppet show will offer kids a visual feast, while cosplay will give teens a chance to become their beloved animated figures. There will be a DIY cartoon figure that the family can do together under the guidance of art teachers. To enrich the children's experience, the cartoon museum will display some of its most curious items. There will also be a small-scale electronics competition to help develop children's appreciation for technology.

When: January 28 – February 9

Where: Capital Library, 88 Dongsanhuan Nan Lu, Chaoyang District

Admission: Free

Tel: 6214 5148



Children can find every cartoon character they like at the cartoon temple fair.

List of traditional temple fair

Temple of Earth Spring Festival Fair

When: January 25 – February 1

Where: Ditan Gongyuan, Andingmen Wai Da Jie

Admission: 10 yuan

Tel: 6421 4657

Changdian Temple Fair

When: January 26-29

Where: Hufang Qiao, Xuanwu District

Admission: Free

Tel: 6302 7874

Daguan Yuan Temple Fair

When: January 26-30

Where: Daguan Yuan, Nanhai Yuan, Xuanwu District

Admission: 20 yuan per person

Tel: 6354 4993

The Summer Palace Royal Temple Fair

When: January 26 – February 9

Where: Yiheyuan, 19 Gongmen Lu, Haidian District

Admission: 30 yuan

Tel: 6288 1144

Lianhua Chi Park Temple Fair

When: January 26-31

Where: Lianhua Chi Park, 48 Lianhua Chi Lu, Guang'anmen Wai Da Jie, Fengtai District

Admission: 10 yuan

Tel: 6346 6607 Yuyuantan Park Temple Fair

When: January 10-30

Where: Yuyuantan Park, 47 Sanlihe Lu, Haidian District

Admission: 5 yuan

Tel: 6852 5536

Longtan Park Temple Fair

When: January 25 – February 1

Where: Longtan Park, 8 Longtan Lu, Chongwen District

Admission: 6 yuan

Tel: 6714 4336

Great customer disservice! (Part 2)

And what you should be doing about it

By Morry Morgan

I'm the first to admit that China's customer service has improved in leaps and bounds. But the airlines, to date, remain the worst offenders.

So what kind of customer service should an airline, or any service provider, maintain. Firstly, let's obliterate the notion that "no news is good news." Frustration results when customers are cut out of the loop. Providing information, no matter how limited, shows customers that you care about their feelings and are doing your utmost to resolve the problem. And this instantly puts you on their side. Once you are on the customers' side, you are unlikely to face the wrath of angry mobs in the Shenzhen airport. Rather, you become an aide and confidant of the masses. Now they can only blame the weather.

Second, staff have to understand that they are part of a total customer experience. Here's an example. My wife and I were returning from a week in Beijing to see the Olympic Games. Our original flight had been for Saturday afternoon, but friends got tickets to the football finals that same day, so we called the airline and had our seats postponed to Sunday.

On arrival at terminal 2, we approached the "Ticketing" counter to arrange for new tickets, knowing that there was a penalty fee to pay. The staff member, with a wave



CFP Photo

of her hand, told us to go to the "Check-in" counter instead.

We followed her direction, and waited in the Shanghai-Beijing Express queue for 10 minutes before being served. However, once we were served we were then told that we could not check in as we had not paid the penalty. We had to return to the "Ticketing" counter!

My wife ran back to where we had just come from, and the frustration began. The No. 8 counter was the only counter free, but this staff member informed my wife that she "could not deal with money."

I'd like to step away from this specific example for a moment to introduce the concept customer service "flash points." The term flash point is used in policing and peace-keeping to describe a geographical location that could easily become violent due to the mixture of tension, violent tendencies of the populace,

and available weapons. Flashpoints could be entire cities, suburbs or streets, but the one thing they have in common is that trouble can be prevented with foresight.

Let's return to the "Ticketing" counter at the Capital International Airport. A customer who appears frustrated is a "flash point." Instead of receiving courteous assistance, a nonchalant, "over there" was given.

"Please speak to my colleague at No. 9 counter. She will be able to assist you with your request, because she is responsible for reissuing tickets." That's what she should have said.

The employee at No. 9 counter printed out two tickets, and my wife returned to the check-in counter, where I had been waiting. Imagine our surprise, and increased frustration, when the check-in clerk announced that we could not board our plane because that flight had

been closed. Apparently we had not checked in 30 minutes before departure. Startled, and confused as to why we had just been issued an irrelevant ticket from the No. 9 counter, I looked up, above the check-in.

In bold white writing, in both English and Chinese, it read: "Check in must be 20 minutes before departure."

According to their sign, we still had 9 minutes remaining!

Flash point ignited.

The morale of the story is that three customer service staff members and an erroneous sign were involved in our total customer experience, but each one treated their "segment" of our experience as separate, isolated and unrelated. Each had an opportunity to douse a flash point, but none did.

We complained and the manager asked us to write down our story in the big book of frustrated customers. They all told the same story: one part of the process was not coordinated with the next.

Unfortunately the total and informative customer service approach is not easy to introduce. It takes leadership from above to initiate a total customer focus before it can become endemic throughout the organization. However, the starting point is acknowledging its need. From this point there are a number of ways to determine weaknesses in your customer service. Sit beside phone operators as

they handle incoming calls, work as a "trainee" on the front desk for a day, play the role of "mystery shopper" and ask for assistance, or involve a training company to do that on your behalf. Regardless of your method, stop reading about improving customer service and be actively involved in improving it.

Now that China is part of the WTO and the Olympics has made it a tourist hotspot, the time to improve customer service has come. As the Shanghai Expo 2010 nears, failure to improve your business's customer service is not only an issue for your company's well-being, but ultimately the longevity of a healthy Chinese economy.



Morry Morgan trains "Needs-based selling" across China, which includes customer relationship management as a key component to repeat business.

Dining

Vasco's Express Lunch

Lunches and business discussions make an excellent combination with your choices of express set lunches. Indulge in authentic Macanese dishes crafted by Chef de Cuisine Ricardo Bizarro such as roasted homemade Portuguese sausage served with Peixinhos da Horta, marinated octopus on a bed of chickpeas, tomato and fresh parsley salad with codfish cakes, Caldo Verde and Vegetable soup with Portuguese sausage.

Where: Vasco's Restaurant, Hilton Beijing Wangfujing, 8 Wangfujing Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District
When: 11:30 am - 2:30 pm
Cost: 108 yuan (subject to 15 percent service charge)

Tel: 5812 8888 ext 8411

Delicacies for Chinese New Year

City Wall Bistro is having a buy one get one free special to celebrate Chinese New Year. Indulge your senses at its dining experience, which features one of the best selections in China. It offers an international dinner buffet focusing on simple contemporary presentation with great flavors and an emphasis on quality ingredients. The dinner buffet menu is mainly focused on Western cuisine, though local Chinese flavor is not forgotten.

Where: City Wall Bistro Restaurant, Beijing Marriott Hotel City Wall, 7 Jianguomen Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District
When: January 23 - February 28 (except February 14)
Cost: 210 yuan (subject to 15 percent service charge)

Tel: 5811 8888

Perfect pots, Supreme soups

Ward off the winter chills or celebrate and connect with friends this festival season. Sample the international buffet with a wide variety of clay pots full of nutritious double boiled and herbal soups. All prices are subject to a 15 percent service charge.

Where: The Westin Beijing Financial Street, 9B Jinrong Jie, Xicheng District

When: Before February 28

Cost: 228 yuan per person (lunch and dinner)
Tel: 6629 7810

Spring Festival Eve Dinner

To celebrate the coming Ox Year, Novotel Beijing West Zhongguancun is offering a Chinese New Year's Eve Dinner Set to satisfy the demands of family union and feast. Guests can receive a festival gift. CCTV's New Year Eve Party will be also shown at site to accompany the sweet ambiance.

Where: Novotel Beijing West Zhongguancun, 36 Haidian Nan Lu, Haidian District

When: January 25

Cost: 1,000 yuan per table, 1,500 yuan per table (subject to 15 percent service charge and minimum 10 persons)

Tel: 8266 9999 ext 5905 or 5609



Buy one get one free

Cafe Swiss is an all-day dining restaurant and chic cafe with an inviting aura of contemporary elegance and warmth. It serves a delectable spread of traditional Swiss specialties, European cuisine and Asian delights.

Invite your loved one or business partner to enjoy the international delicacies while they are buy one get one free. This offer is valid only on weekends and Friday evenings, excluding beverages. All prices are subject to 15 percent service charge.

Where: Cafe Swiss, Swissotel Beijing, 2 Chaoyangmen Bei Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: Before March 31, 11:30 am - 2:30 pm (lunch), 6-10 pm (dinner)

Tel: 6553 2288 ext 2127



Lantern Festival Celebration

Traditional tangyuan symbolize family unity and reunion. Sample the delicious sweet dumplings with other festival favorites. Enjoy a sumptuous five-course gourmet set menu prepared by the master Chinese chef of the Grand Millennium Beijing with a bottle of local red wine for every table.

Where: Yao Chi Cantonese Restaurant, Grand Millennium Beijing, 7 Dongshan-huan Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District

Cost: 688 yuan nett (for two persons)
Tel: 6590 9383

Hotel

New Director of Marketing on board at JW Marriott Hotel Beijing

Julian Wong has been appointed director of marketing at the JW Marriott Hotel Beijing. Wong, who joined Marriott International in 1996 at the Renaissance Kuala Lumpur Hotel, has years of hotel experience with the company. His past assignments include the Renaissance Brands in Sandakan, Saigon and Wuhan, as well as Shanghai Hongqiao and the Guam Marriott.

(By Sun Feng)

Chinglish story

This column focuses on Chinglish mistakes in our daily life. If you have any experiences to share, send them to Gan Tian at gantian@ynet.com.



CFP Photo

Feeling the holiday pinch

By Jin Zhu

Because of the global financial crisis, office employees are increasingly experiencing financial difficulties, especially as Spring Festival approaches.

At a company party in a Chaoyang District restaurant last weekend, I bumped into a group of former classmates and Nancy, one of my foreign teachers in college.

"Hi! Long time no see!" I ran up to them to say hello. We were all excited at the chance meeting since it was the first time since graduation in June.

We ended up chatting about the financial crisis, since many of us were feeling its impact.

"Typically, our company would give employees like me a year-end bonus. But now everything has changed," Jane, one of my classmates, said.

"Yes, all of a sudden, everything has become so difficult. The pressure from work and financial obligations has brought my

spirits down. Everybody's anxious about how the year-end evaluation would go in case the company decides to lay off more workers," Matthew, another classmate who is now editor of a Web site, said.

"If I cannot generate 1 million hits on our site per day, I'll only be paid 70 percent of my present salary in the next quarter. On top of that, I've lost my part-time job of doing voice recordings, which I've had for a year. That means I already lost 30 percent of my total income," he said.

The atmosphere suddenly turned glum.

"Hey, let's talk about happier things. Spring Festival will be next weekend. How about we hold a party to relax?" I said to change the subject. "We can invite other friends to a karaoke lounge."

"Oh, that will likely cost more than I can afford, especially this holiday season. Are there any other suggestions?" Jane said.

"Well, how about a tour Beijing's out-

skirts?" Matthew said. "That will be a fun way to spend a day."

"But that will involve even more money than the previous proposal. Just imagine the cost of gasoline," Jane said. "I have been under a lot of financial pressure. My monthly income has continually decreased since September, so I'm having a shortage in my hands."

"What do you mean by having a shortage in your hands?" Nancy said.

"I mean, I'm short of money right now and have no more extra to spend for leisure activities," Jane said.

"You mean you 'felt the pinch.' It is the phrase to express that someone is short of money or feeling restricted in some other ways," Nancy said.

We eventually decided how to spend the Spring Festival together. We said we would get together at the same restaurant where we bumped into each other.

Chinglish on the way

This column aims to identify Chinglish in public areas. If you see any Chinglish signs, please take a picture and send it to gantian@ynet.com together with your name and address.



Photo provided by Engrish.com

To abuse plastic bag

By Tiffany Tan

This looks like a sign you would see in anger management: there is an object in which you could vent out your anger and in the process rid you of toxic emotions. A punching bag or a life-sized doll will do the trick. But a plastic bag? There must have been some mistake! But of course, and the finger points at Chinglish.

The context of this statement is not clear

– is it a grocery store sign? a local government notice? – but it says that people who misuse plastic bags will need to fork out 2 dollars. In the lead up to the Olympics, Beijing shops stopped giving free plastic bags to shoppers. Instead, people were encouraged to bring their own bags to minimize plastic waste. This sign was written in the same spirit of environmental protection.

Blacklist

Beijing Today has come up with Blacklist, a new column of words or phrases commonly misused by Chinese speakers. If you're planning to be an English teacher, reporter or employee of a multinational company, then this page is your new best friend. Watch out for it each week.

Local professor: Zhu Shida

1. The enthusiasms is dieing

"Enthusiasm" is an abstract noun, so it does not take a plural form. Therefore, it is wrong to say "enthusiasms." Secondly, "dieing" as the participle form of the verb "die" is wrong; it should be "dying." Beginner English learners are susceptible to committing this error. But with the verb "dye," it is "dyeing," while with the verb "age," it is "aging" and not "ageing." You have to commit all of these to memory.

2. The authorities were shifting the policy on the exchange rate to helping the economic slump.

In the sentence, the verb "shifting" is not equal in status to "helping." Rather, the infinitive phrase "to help the economic slump" serves as an adverbial of purpose. So the sentence should be redone this way: The authorities were shifting the policy on the exchange rate to help the economic slump.

Native speaker: Penny Turner

1. The enthusiasms is dieing

I agree with Professor Zhu's diagnosis and the treatment he suggested. To add to the discussion on troublesome verbs, take "lay" and "lie." Lay means to put or set something down, and needs an object in a sentence. Lie means to be or to stay at rest in a horizontal position, and does not need an object. What makes it confusing is that the past tense of "lie" is "lay." Here are the present, past and past participle of both verbs, respectively: lay, laid, laid; lie, lay, lain. And then there is the other verb "lie" which means to make a false statement. Its principal verb forms are lie, lied, lied. There is no other way around these hurdles but memory work.

2. The authorities were shifting the policy on the exchange rate to helping the economic slump.

My biggest problem with this sentence, aside from the infinitive phrase "to helping," is the choice of "shifting" in reference to policy. Readers get the writer's gist, but policy changes are usually phrased as "revisions" or "amendments." This would be a better way to put the sentence, with other alterations added liberally: "The authorities were revising the exchange rate policy to deal with the economic slump."



Movie of the week
If you stay awake through the first half of this movie, it will turn out to be one of last year's finest films, the acting and directing are world class.

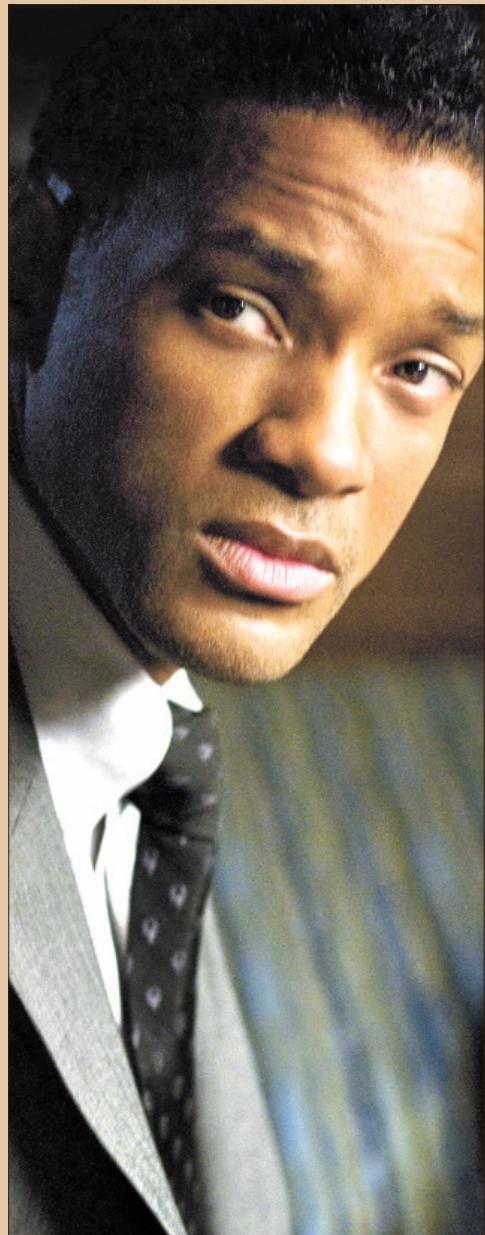
The movie makes up for its slow pace in the last 30 minutes when all the pieces come together. It is a must-see that's guaranteed to blow you away.

Synopsis

Academy Award nominee Will Smith reunites with the director and producer of *The Pursuit of Happyness* for this emotional drama of an IRS agent whose quest for redemption becomes unexpectedly complicated after he falls in love.

Ben Thomas is an IRS agent with a fateful secret. Assuming the identity of his younger brother, he sets out in search of redemption. Instead, Ben discovers true love while forever changing the lives of seven complete strangers.

Woody Harrelson, Rosario Dawson, Michael Ealy and Barry Pepper co-star.



Vocabulary

1. **within my power:** capability of doing or accomplishing something.
2. **exchequer:** a treasury, part of a state or nation
3. **look over:** here means to review past records
4. **get discharged:** here means to leave a hospital
5. **call one off:** take away
6. **end up as:** finally be or do something

(By Huang Daohen)



Seven pounds

(2008)

Scene 1: LA motel

(Ben Thomas is in a motel to commit a suicide.)

911: 911 emergency service.

Ben Thomas (Ben): I need an ambulance.

911: I have you at 9212 West Third Street in Los Angeles.

Ben: Yes, room number 2.

911: What's the emergency?

Ben: There has been a suicide.

911: Who is the victim?

Ben: I am.

Scene 2: Hospital

(Ben is on his way to meet Stewart Goodman, a doctor to whom he will donate an organ.)

Ben: Hello, my name is Ben. I totally understand if you don't want to speak with me either, but I would really like to just have a moment of your time. I'm trying to figure out what kind of man Stewart Goodman is. It's **within my power** (1) to drastically change his circumstances. But I do not want to give him a gift he does not deserve. I need you to tell me whether or not he is a good person?

Inez (a patient): The drug he gives me makes me dizzy. I want a new one.

Ben: It sounds very reasonable, Inez. What else? You can trust me. What else, Inez?

Stewart Goodman (Goodman): Ben? Where are you going?

Ben: Where's the washroom?

Goodman: To the right. Is there a problem?

Ben: Give her a bath. Right now!

Goodman: Absolutely!

Inez: Thank you.

Goodman: Ben, I think you have misunderstood. It is a mistake.

Ben: I am going to stop by from time to time to make sure that you show those people some respect. Don't treat people like

that.

Goodman: Let me explain to you, okay? Ben.

Ben: I'm not giving you an extension. I'm not giving anything.

Goodman: Ben!

Ben: I almost believe you, you son of a bitch! I almost believe you.

Scene 3: Coffee house

(Emily Posa (Emily): Are you looking at him or looking at me?)

Ben: Actually, I was just sitting here. Am I doing it wrong?

Emily: I think I saw you in the elevator the other day.

Ben: Oh, yes. In fact, you're being audited. My name is Ben Thomas. I'm from the **exchequer** (2). And you owed the government US \$56,240.19.

Emily: I know.

Ben: And now, you get me. Would you have a seat please, Miss Posar. I've been **looking over** (3) the income statements in the past three years. 2005, 2006 ...

Emily: You were ... Were you in my room the other night?

Ben: No, ma'am. I was not in your room the other night. It is not exactly IRS protocol. So we've been looking over 2005, 2006 and 2007 and it seems to be quite discrepant between what you claimed...

Emily: Mr Thomas, I just **got discharged** (4). So, you know unless you gonna **call me off** (5) to a IRS jail or something, I really like to get home now.

Ben: Sure. No problem. I'll be in touch.

Scene 4: On the road

(Ben drives Emily home after she leaves the hospital.)

Emily: Ben?

Ben: Yes.

Emily: I know I am the girl with the broken wing. But you, who are you?

Ben: Who am I? Your friendly neighborhood tax collector, Ben.

Emily: Where the hell did you come from?

Ben: I grew up in Oakland.

Emily: Really ... Well. Where did you go to college?

Ben: As far from Oakland as possible. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. How about you?

Emily: UCLA. You went to MIT. Like DMIT?

Ben: And you are wondering how I **end up as** (6) a lowly tax collector?

Emily: Accurate.

Ben: ... I do not want to talk about me.

Emily: Too bad ... You're very interesting. Have you ever been in love?

Ben: Emily, please ...

Emily: Yes, you have. Come on, you can say.

Ben: Yes. But it ended.

Emily: What happened?

Ben: Stop it.

Emily: Really, you should ...

Ben: Stop it. You need to get some rest. I'll call you tomorrow or maybe I'll stop by.

Emily: What if I have questions then?

Ben: That's not part of the deal.

Emily: What the hell does that mean?

(Emily gets out of the car.)

Ben: Emily, hold on! Wait.

Emily: Thank you for everything you have done.

Scene 5: Emily's home

Ben: I never realized how late it was. I gotta go. I do not want to lie to you all. I do not want...

Emily: Want to play a game?

Ben: What game?

Emily: The game "as if ..." What if I would call pager? And I'd find a heart? And it would work. And my body would not reject it. And I ... like if I have time?

Emily: What if ... Like if we marry?

Ben: Like if we have children? I love you.